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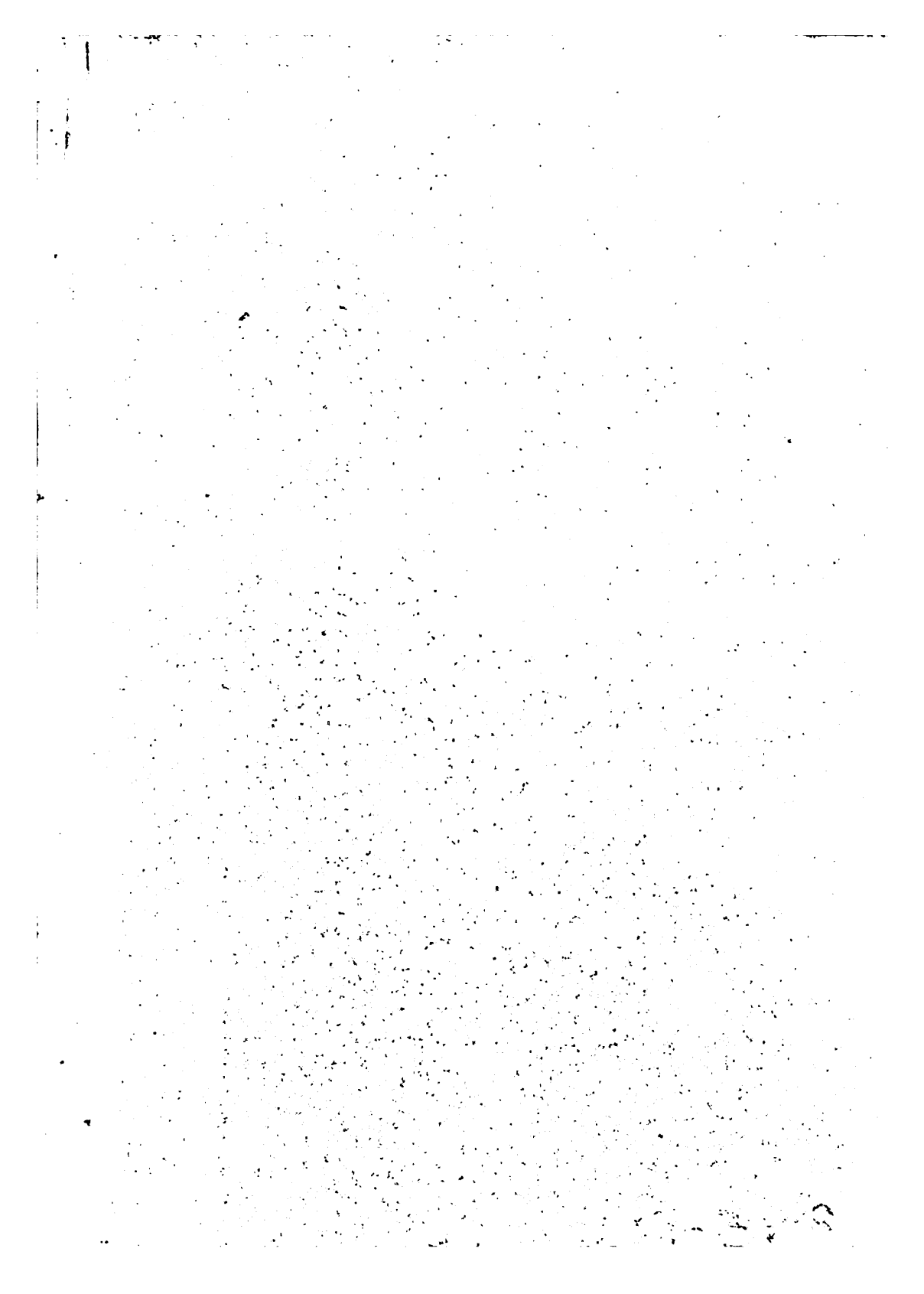

VENICE

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CROSSING THE PIAZZA

VENICE

BY MORTIMER MENPES

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Arrival and First Impressions	3
History	17
A Glimpse into Bohemia	39
Architecture	55
St. Mark's	77
Painters of the Renaissance	91
Streets, Shops, and Courtyards	125
The Islands of the Lagoon	149
Social Ups and Downs	173
Gondolas and Gondoliers	193

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1.	Crossing the Piazza	*Frontispiece*
		FACING PAGE
2.	Grand Canal, showing Tower of St. Geremia	2
3.	A Pink Palace	4
4.	Palazzo Pisani	6
5.	The Salute at Sunset	8
6.	A Chioggia Fishing Boat	10
7.	A Ruined Palazzo	12
8.	Palazzi on the Canal	14
9.	Giudecca	16
10.	The Pink Bridge	18
11.	San Giorgio Maggiore	20
12.	Off the Giudecca	22
13.	All Saints Quay at St. Trovaso	24
14.	St. Maria delle Misericordia	26
15.	The Custom House and Church of Santa Maria della Salute	28
16.	At Chioggia	30
17.	Church of San Geremia	32
18.	The Bridge of Sighs and Straw Bridge	34
19.	On the Grand Canal	36
20.	The Bridge of Sighs	38
21.	Early Morning	40
22.	Palace in a By-Canal	42

List of Illustrations

FACING PAGE

23. The Orange Door 44
24. An Old Doorway 48
25. An Unfrequented Canal 50
26. St. Mark's Basin 52
27. Hotel Danieli 54
28. Porta della Carta 56
29. Grand Canal looking towards the Dogana . . . 58
30. A Famous Palazzo 60
31. Entrance to the Grand Canal 62
32. Panorama seen from St. Mark's Basin . . . 64
33. The Dogana and Salute 66
34. Palazzo Contarini degli Scrigni 68
35. Church of the Jesuits 70
36. Santa Maria della Salute 72
37. Palazzo Mengaldo 74
38. Ospedale Civile 76
39. St. Mark's 78
40. Palazzo Danieli 80
41. Francesca 82
42. The Dogana 84
43. St. Mark's Piazza 86
44. Scuola di San Marco 88
45. A Quiet Waterway 90
46. I Trei Ponti 92
47. Canal Priuli 94
48. Late Afternoon 96
49. Osmarin Canal 98
50. San Giorgio Maggiore 100
51. A Sotto Portico 102
52. At the Mouth of the Grand Canal 104
53. The Fountain 106

List of Illustrations

FACING PAGE

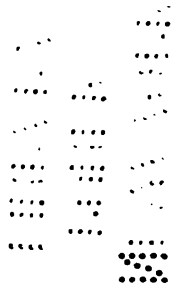
54. A Narrow Canal 108
55. Bridge near the Palazzo Labia 110
56. The House with the Blue Door 112
57. Canal in Giudecca Island 114
58. The Orange Sail 118
59. A Quiet Rio 120
60. Humble Quarters 122
61. Rio di San Marina 124
62. A Squero or Boat-building Yard 126
63. The Weekly Wash 128
64. A Back Street 130
65. A Factory Girl 132
66. Household Cares 136
67. The Wooden Spoon Seller 138
68. In the Market Place 140
69. Work Girls 142
70. Bead Stringers 144
71. On the Lagoon 148
72. Chioggia Fish Market 150
73. The Lido 152
74. Chioggia 154
75. A Fisherman of the Lagoon 156
76. In Murano 158
77. Mrs Eden's Garden in Venice 160
78. Timber Boats from the Shores of the Adriatic . . 162
79. Shipping off the Giudecca 162
80. Midday on the Lagoon 163
81. By a Squero or Boat-building Yard 164
82. In a Side Street, Chioggia 166
83. Santa Maria della Salute 168
84. Fishermen of the Marina 170

List of Illustrations

FACING PAGE

85. Rio e Chiesa degli Ognissanti 174
86. A Campiello 176
87. Fishing Boats from Chioggia 178
88. A Woman of the People 180
89. Chioggia 184
90. The Boat-building Yard at San Trovaso . . . 186
91. Midday on the Grand Canal 188
92. The Fish Market 190
93. Midday on the Lagoon 196
94. A Traghetto 200
95. Marietta 204
96. Bambino 208
97. A Squero or Boat-building Yard in Venice . . 212
98. Under the Midday Sun 214
99. A Festa 216
100. The Rialto 218

ARRIVAL AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS



GRAND CANAL, SHOWING TOWER OF ST. GEREMIA

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ARRIVAL AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS

THERE is no city more written about, more painted, and more misrepresented, than Venice. Students, poets, and painters have combined in reproducing her many charms. Usually, however, Venice is described in a hurried, careless way: the subject is seldom gone deeply into, and studied as it should be, before attempting to compile a book. It is only one who has been there, and observed the life and characteristics of the people for years, who can gain any true perception of their character. Those who have not been to Venice must needs know by heart her attractions, which have been so persistently thrust before the public; but unless half a dozen really excellent books have been read concerning her, the city of their imaginations must be a theatrical Venice, unreal and altogether false. Normally one feels that the last word about

Venice has been said—the last chord struck upon her keyboard, the last harmony brought out. But this is by no means the case. There are chords still to be struck, and harmonies still to be brought out: her charm can never be exhausted. The last chord struck, no matter how poorly executed it may be, goes on vibrating in our ears, and all unconsciously we are listening for another. How strange this is! Why should it be so? What other cities impress us in the same way? Oxford perhaps, and Rome certainly. These are the only two which come to my mind at the moment. They are the cities of the soul, round which endless romantic histories cling, endless dear and glorious associations. Perhaps the reason why one never tires of books on Venice, or of pictures of Venice, is that they none of them fulfil one's desires and expectations—they never express just what one feels about her—there is always something left unsaid, something uninterpreted; and one is always waiting for that. It is impossible to express all one feels with regard to Venice. One feels one's own incompetence terribly. Try as you may, you can only give one day, one hour, one aspect of sea and sky, only the four seasons, not all the myriad changes between;—only four

A PINK PALACE

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times of the day—dawn, mid-day, twilight, and night—not the thousand melting changes, not the continual variations. It is not a panorama, not a magnificent view permanent before one's gaze. The cloud forms will never be quite the same as you see them at a certain moment; the water will never be again of that particular shade of green; the reflection of a pink palace, with the black barge at its base laden with golden fruit, will never again be thrown upon the water quite in that same way; there will not always be that warm golden light bathing sea and sky and palace; that particular pearly-grey mist in the early morning will never recur, never quite that deep blue-black of night with the orange lights and the steely water.

When one lives in Venice one becomes absolutely in sympathy with the place. One feels her beautiful colour; but it is quite another story when one comes to reproduce it. Words cannot describe nor brush portray it. Thousands have attempted to paint Venice; but few have succeeded. The Venetians themselves, loving their country, painted her continually; but even they could only give one aspect of her. The pictures of Venice by Venetian masters are chiefly of her

pomp and glory, her State functions and her water fêtes. However, one finds marvellous glimpses of landscape work in some of the great masterpieces —sweeps of sky above the heads of some of the Madonnas, skies in which one can feel the shimmer of light so characteristic of Venice, the blending of the tones and the flaming glory of the sunset sky. Turner, too, caught the radiant, shimmering, bright and opalescent qualities of the lagoon scenery; but even his palette could not cope with the ever-changing colour.

One must be either hot or cold with regard to Venice. You cannot be lukewarm. The magic of her spell begins to work upon you immediately you arrive. Most of us imagine what the place will be like before we reach it. We people it in our dreams, and visualise it for ourselves—canals, palaces, streets, the general appearance of things. This imaginary city has no foundations save those which are supplied by pictures and stories.

One's first impressions are always those which one remembers longest, and one's first impressions of Venice are surpassingly beautiful. In the train, arriving, you catch glimpses of flashes of light in the darkness, more strangely fantastic than any-

PALAZZO PISANI

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thing you could imagine; you traverse a long causeway stretching over the lagoon; you see the water on either side of you, jet black, stretching on indefinitely; the train seems to float on air; you cannot see the bridge—nothing but sky and water. You arrive at a large terminal station, and step into the gondola which is to take you into Venice. Into most cities one arrives in a whirl and shriek of engines amid smoke and bustle; but Venice is different. One arrives in a gondola. The water is of a clear pale green; the banks are scrubby grass and mud. One watches the silver prow of the gondola as it shoots forward, the sea air blowing keen and salt. You realise that you are in a wide canal, and that there are buildings on either side of you, looming up white and gaunt, with here and there a lantern glimmering at their base. It is strange to see a city rising thus out of the sea. Venice seems double: one sees it in the substance and in the reflections on the water.

After gliding along for some time you turn up narrow water lanes, devious and branching, running by low stonework, very complicated in their turnings. There are doors with water creeping up their steps, striped posts looking like spectres, and

arches everywhere. Strange figures, like phantoms in a dream, appear in the gloom; black gondolas, like funeral biers, lie silently at the base of the houses; and the water laps dully at the steps. The silence of the waterways is deathlike after the rush and noise of a long journey; each shape that passes looks ghostly in the dim light; it is like a city of eternal sleep, a city of death. What a perfect background it would make for melodrama or for tragedy! No crime or intrigue could be too terrible to happen within those unfathomable shadows! A brigand might pass within that heavy half-opened oak door silently and unnoticed. A corpse with a stiletto buried in its breast might be gliding by in that black gondola. One would be quite surprised and somewhat shocked on lifting the felce to discover a fat and florid tradesman returning from supper with a friend. Venice is not a fitting background for such a sordid every-day scene. She is much better suited to the romances of Maturin, Lewis, and Ann Radcliffe; to the Great Bandit, the stories of the Three Inquisitors, the Council of Ten, masked spies, and pitfalls.

In the daytime one recognises Venice as the Venice of Canaletto, of Bonington, and of Wild.

THE SALUTE AT SUNSET

There is that same vague, luminous atmosphere, full of rays and mists; the coming and going of gondolas or galiots; the landing-place of the Piazzetta, with its Gothic lanterns ornamented by figures of the saints, fixed on poles and sunk into the sea; the vermilion façade of the Ducal Palace, lozenged with white and rose marble, its massive pillars supporting a gallery of small columns. With all this one has been familiar through the pictures of the masters whom I have mentioned; but the real Venice is still more beautiful, still more wonderful, still more fantastic.

If you climb up on any height and look down upon the lagoon, you will see a sight never to be forgotten. You will imagine that it is a dream which has taken shape, a vision of fairy-land. The sea is dotted with craft of all kinds. There is a continuous movement of boats—gondolas, sailing vessels, and steam-boats pouring forth volumes of black smoke and making a disturbance on the peaceful lagoon. The water is limpid, the light radiant; a row of stakes on the lagoon marks the channels which are navigable for ships. There is the island of San Giorgio, with its red steeple, its white basilica, surrounded by a girdle of boats, and looking like a sheet of burnished

silver. There is the Giudecca, a maritime suburb of Venice, turning towards the city a row of houses and towards the sea a belt of gardens; it has two churches, Santa Maria and the Redentore. There is San Clemate, at the back of the Giudecca, a place of penitence and of detention for priests under discipline; Poreglia, where the vessels are quarantined; and the little island of St. Peter, almost invisible in the distance. The only black cupola is that of St. Simeon the Less. Those of the other churches are silvery. The clouds and the islands seem to mingle one with the other, and are as baffling as the mirage in a desert. On a fine day in Venice there is a certain brilliant crystalline clearness sharpening every outline; every tower and dome stands out sharp and clear against the sky, making the colours burn. There is colour everywhere: even the islands in the distance are blue and distinct. There is colour in the groups that saunter by, in the sapphire water, and in the cloudless heavens. The air is warm and still; the streets are full of people, walking and loitering at the doors of the shops; sunbeams dance on the rippling water; spring is everywhere. As evening comes on the colours grow richer and deeper; scarlet clouds float across

A CHIOGGIA FISHING BOAT

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the amber sky; the canal takes on the hues of the upper air, and is a rippling mass of liquid topaz and molten gold, in rapid succession changing from gold to orange, and from orange to deepest crimson. In the soft hazy light, against the rose tone of the sky, the cupolas of the islands and the palaces seem to float, shimmering with the hues of mother-of-pearl, mysterious, dream-like, not like solid stone. The soft lap of the water breaks the silence; the vaporous mists float upwards. Across the light drifts a line of fishing boats, their great brown sails set. A streak of flame-colour strikes on the windows of Venice, a flush of orange and rose. Then in a second the sun is gone, and a brief space of doubt ensues, when day hangs trembling in the balance; then night settles on the lagoon. A hundred bells ring out over the city, clashing and clamouring together in one brazen peal. Soon the peal subsides. The evening breeze springs up mild and sweet from the sea, and the soft and mellow cry of "Stali! Ah Stali!" is heard everywhere. It is the hour when all that is poor and unlovely melts into ethereal beauty. The water is a deep blue-black, save for rippling trails of light from the lamps, which shine like golden stars from the prows of the gondolas. The

moon rises, nearly full, and is veiled by hazy clouds; the outlines of the bell towers of the palaces are pale and delicate in the soft light. The stillness of the water streets is soothing, and the prattle of the city falls gently on the ears.

No matter how prosaic or how unimpressionable one may be, one soon grows into sympathy with the atmosphere of Venice. It is almost impossible to avoid becoming sentimental as one floats in one's gondola at night, with the twinkling stars above and the twinkling splashes below. One almost unconsciously builds romances round the palaces tottering to decay. Venice is always ready to charm and allure you. It is hard to believe that somewhere there is a working, active, busy life going on. But indeed no one in Venice seems to be in earnest. It is as if the present time does not count, as if it were but an echo of what passed long years ago. People work without aim or energy, and when they suffer it seems as if they were but mumming. A sweetness and a docility steal into one's soul, and one feels that one can do nothing but drift on for ever in this pleasant idleness. Harsh voices become modulated; cross-grained, querulous natures are sweetened; even the flat-faced, spectacled tourists,

A RUINED PALAZZO

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when they step from the railway station into a gondola and glide into the mystic water city, alive with a myriad glistening lights, develop unconsciously, and despite themselves, into delightful people.

On the day when I arrived in Venice, as I was wandering down a lane beyond the Canareggio Canal, I found myself in the Jewish part of the city. It is a fetid and pestilential place. There is about it nothing pleasant, or wholesome, or attractive. The stonework is cracked and rotten. The houses, streaked with dirt, bend over into the water with the weight of years. Most of them are nine stories high, grimy and dirty, and speckled with green spots. There is not a straight line anywhere, and not a whole pane of glass—paper is the substitute. Now and then one sees a patch of plaster on a house; but for the most part the plaster has fallen away, revealing the crumbly red bricks beneath. It gives one a sickening feeling—this terrible poverty, solitude, and neglect. Everything is strange, sullen, mysterious. Men and women with curved noses and eyes set like burning coals in their pale faces glide noiselessly along with furtive glances. The children are half naked, and play about on benches in the streets. I have

seen poverty-stricken Jewish quarters before, but never anything so sad as this. The sordidness and terrible despair of it make one's heart ache. There are no green fields and trees to alleviate the misery of the people. Yet, I suppose, the condition of the Jew was worse in the old days. Certainly the injustices and insults which once were prevalent do not occur now. The Christian to-day is on more or less friendly terms with the Jew. They meet one another on the exchange; they talk together, and partake of each other's hospitality.

The Christian may despise the Jew; but he has the grace to keep the feeling to himself, for the Jew possesses a great part of the trade of the city, and in money matters has ever the upper hand. He is educated, intellectual, patriotic, and calls himself a Venetian. If he is rich he lives in a fine new house on the Grand Canal and is owner of other houses. An instinct of the poorer class of Jews in Venice is to set up pawnshops and lend money to tradesmen in times of necessity. The Jews are decidedly useful. In the old days they were driven into exile; but they were soon called back. They were made to wear a yellow badge, distinguishing them from Christians. They

PALAZZI ON THE CANAL

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were not allowed to buy houses or lands, or to exercise any trade or profession excepting that of medicine. They were given a dwelling-place in the dirtiest, unhealthiest part of the city, and called it a Ghetto, meaning a congregation. It was walled in. The gates were kept by Christian guards, who were paid by the Jews, and opened the doors at dawn, closing them at sunset. The Jews were not allowed to emerge on holidays or feast days, and two barges full of armed men watched them night and day. A special magistracy had charge of their affairs. Their dead were buried in the sand on the sea-shore. Thither the baser of the Venetians made it a habit to go on Mondays in September, to dance and make merry on the graves. The Jews were made to pay tribute to Venice every third year.

In spite of all hardships and deprivations, they flourished. As the Christians became poor, the Jews waxed rich. They were not again expelled from the city. They were never disturbed in their Ghetto by actual ill-treatment and violence, excepting on one occasion, when a charge was brought against them of child murder. So the Jews lived peacefully in their own quarter until, with the advent of modern civilisation, their prison walls

crumbled away, and some of them went forth from the Ghetto and fixed their habitations in different parts of the city. Many Jewish families, however, cling to the spot made sacred for them by so much suffering and humiliation. Even to this day, although the Jews are distributed everywhere throughout the length and breadth of Venice, never a Christian comes to dwell in the Ghetto. Very many Jews still live there. Some of the women are handsome, with Oriental grace, delicate, sensitive, highly bred. The only time when the Ghetto has at all a picturesque appearance is the autumn. Then the air is filled with white floating particles, feathers of geese, which seem to be plucked by the whole force of the populace. You see on every doorstep groups of Hebrew youths plucking geese, and on looking into the interior you will observe strings of the birds suspended from the rafters, while an odour of roast goose greets your nostrils wherever you may go.

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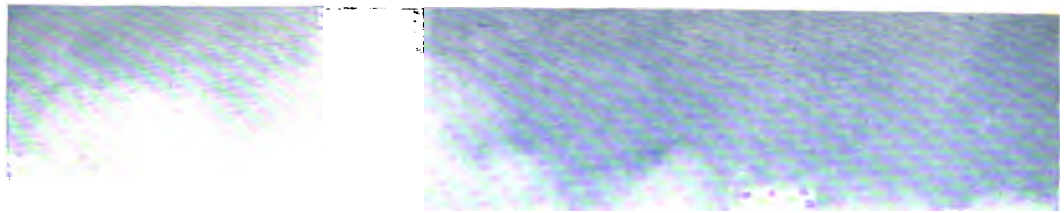

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HISTORY

THE PINK BRIDGE

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HISTORY

WITH her pomp and pageantry, her wealth of art, her learned academies, her schools of painting, and her sumptuous style, Venice at the prime of her life was great, dazzling, splendid. Her navy was supreme. Her nobles were the richest in Europe. This opulence and this pride led to her downfall. She was unable to resist the temptation of building herself an empire on the mainland, thereby causing jealousy among the other Italian States. Rome became fearful of her own safety, and, with the intention of crushing the Republic, formed the League of Cambray. Rome did not achieve her object; but Venice was weakened by the blow, and misfortune after misfortune fell upon her. The passage round the Cape of Good Hope was discovered; which took commercial trade with the East out of her hands, and left her no longer the mart of Europe.

Then came the great battles with the Turk, in which both blood and money of Venice flowed in vain. Europe was either powerless or too indifferent to help. Gradually the strength of Venice was broken. She declined and sank. Still, the rigidity and the power of endurance of the Venetian constitution were marvellous. She kept a semblance of life long after the heart had ceased to beat. The constitution of the State was the most elaborate imaginable, and not easily brought to nothing. Nevertheless, although there were occasional flashes of the old brilliancy of Venice, her day was over. The last of her Doges yielded the State to Napoleon without a blow. Laying the ducal biretta on the table, he called to his servants, "Take it away: I shall not use it more."

When the first refugees came from the mainland and started life on the islands of the Archipelago, the mud-banks of Torcello and Rivoalto, they little thought that they were founding a city which was to be the admiration of the whole world, that her navy would ride supreme in all known waters, that Venice was to be the pride of the Adriatic. When those early people, the Veneti, from whom the Venetians take their name,

SAN GIORGIO MAGGIORE

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drove in their first stakes and built their wattled walls, they could not have foretold that this was to be the greatest of mediæval republics, the centre of the commerce of Europe. Nature helped Venice handsomely. Had the channels been deeper, men-of-war might have entered and conquered the city. Had the waves been stronger, the airy structure that we know as Venice would have been supplanted by the ordinary commercial seaport. Had there been no tide, for sanitary reasons the city would have been uninhabitable. Had the tide risen any higher than it rose, there would have been no water entrances to the palaces, the by-canals would have been filled up, and the character of the place spoiled.

One's imagination is inclined to run riot in Venice. One gilds, and romances, and fills the city with pomp and pageantry, ornamenting the canals with State barges, the piazza with noble men and fair women, and the Ducal Palace with illustrious Doges. But far more interesting is it to see Venice as she really is, in her own simple strength. Think of the more rugged Venice, that city built by strong and patient men against such terrible odds, and in so wild and solitary a spot. In order to gain some idea of Venice as she was in

those early days, it is well to go out in a gondola at low tide, when the canal is a plain of seaweed. As your gondola makes its way down a narrow channel, you have some conception of the difficulties with which the founders of Venice had to contend. To the narrow strips of land, long ridges guarding the lagoon from the sea, ill sheltered from the waves, the few hundred stragglers came. Their capital, Padua, had been destroyed by the northern hordes, and they took shelter in the islands of the lagoon. So desolate and wind-swept were these islands that one can scarcely imagine men disputing possession of them with the flocks of sea-birds. They were impelled by no whim, however: they were exiles driven by necessity. Here they looked for a temporary home, lived much as the sea-birds lived, and were quite fearless. The soil, composed chiefly of dust, ashes, and bitumen, with here and there a layer of salt, was rich and fertile. This was in the fifth century of our era, of which period there are but few Venetian records.

Still, one thing is certain: the Veneti were not a primitive or barbarous people. Fugitives as they were, they were for the most part of high birth and associations. They had character and intelligence. In their mud huts they possessed

OFF THE GIUDECCA

a social distinction and a political training such as would have graced the most sumptuous of palaces. In quite early days they began to put their heads together and to form a definite system of polity. Year by year the little community was added to. Battle and bloodshed continued on the mainland, and men and women flocked to the islands. It is curious to notice how rank and social distinction assert themselves. Blood will out. Wherever human beings are gathered together, whether on the islands of the Adriatic or on those of the South Seas, and however sorry their plight or great their general misfortune, different grades will become visible. Men and women will place themselves one above the other, the master and the man, the mistress and the maid—such is the law of humanity all the world over. Calamity did not in the long run have much effect upon the higher class of refugees, and the position of the lower classes was not bettered. Sympathy had levelled social distinctions for a time; but that was not for long. Soon, in the natural course of events, when the little colony grew into a city, and the origin of the Veneti had faded almost into a tradition, the various ranks became distinct. True, they lived as sea-birds live, one kind of food common to both,

and one kind of house sheltering both; but the poor man and the rich did not live in equality.

As the community grew in importance they began to cultivate their islands and to build unto themselves ships. By force of necessity, they became expert in all matters of navigation, as agile on the water as on land, fearless. They acquired a better means of navigation and a wider knowledge of the lagoons than any other State possessed. Then they began to be attacked. With great courage and determination, Venice resisted all her foes — Gothic, Lombard, Byzantine, and Frank. Her position was peculiar, vague. She acknowledged a certain allegiance to the Court of Byzantium; yet by her acts she recognised the supremacy of the kingdoms on the mainland. Neither Byzantium nor Ravenna, and not Padua, could claim the lagoons. Venice was marvellously diplomatic. She drew from East and West exactly what she wanted to make her a nation by herself. While she pretended allegiance to several empires, she was in reality struggling for independence. In the stillness of the lagoon and the freedom of the sea air, the germs of individuality grew and flourished. They had a congenial soil and fitting nutriment. It is wonderfully interesting to watch the progress

ALL SAINTS QUAY AT ST. TROVASO

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of the little State—the diplomatic way she went to work: how when she was weak and unable to stand alone she feigned allegiance to a stronger Power, yet never bound herself by written word; how she played one Power against the other; and how in the end, when sufficiently strong, under the shelter of her various foster-mothers, she struck out for freedom boldly.

There is a letter from Cassiodorus, Prefect of Theodoric the Great, which throws light upon the relations of Venice with the Goths. Theodoric endeavoured to veil his power over Venice under the guise of alliance or of hospitality. At the time of the famine in 520 he came to their rescue with provisions. This gave him a certain hold over the Venetian people. It imposed upon them a debt which was not to be easily discharged. A letter written by Cassiodorus in 523 is neither more nor less than a demand to the Venetians to bring supplies of oil, wine, and honey, which the islands possessed, to the Goths. The letter, which is of florid style, is one long sneer veiled in delicate flattery. Cassiodorus explains that the Venetians own certain ships, that they are well built, that the sea is an easy path to them; and he begs that the vessels will transport the tributes of Istria to the

shores of his country. By this letter one realises that the Venetians had already a reputation as pilots and mariners, and knew well how to thread in and out the channels of the lagoons. Theodoric was a generous and powerful neighbour, and the only homage the Venetians could give the Goths in return was their water service; but they felt their weakness and dependence deeply, and were continually waiting for an opportunity to better their position. Consequently, when the war broke out, after Theodoric's death, between his successors and the Greek Emperor, the Venetians struggled to make themselves of value, and took an active share in the operations. They sided with the Lombards, and conveyed a large reinforcement of Lombard mercenaries to their destination. That was the beginning of their intimate connection with Constantinople. Two churches were erected in commemoration of the services of the islanders. These were built of costly materials, probably obtained from buildings on the mainland which were partially destroyed by the invaders. The Venetians were enabled to transport these treasures in their ships.

Much to the anger of the Paduans, Venice was growing very rapidly, and was gradually, by sheer

ST. MARIA DELLE MISERICORDIA

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competence, absorbing all the coast and river trade. Longinus paid a visit to Venice, begging that she would procure means of transport for his people. This was granted; but he endeavoured to force the Venetians to accept the suzerainty of his master, which was immediately refused in a grand and sovereign manner. The Venetians declared that, amid much toil and labour, and in the face of many hardships from Hun, Vandal, Goth, and Lombard, God had helped and protected them in order that they might continue to live in the watery marshes. They proudly stated that this group of islands was an ideal habitation, and that no power of emperor or prince should take it from them. It was impossible to attack them, they maintained, unless by the sea; and of that they were assured masters. This reception must have impressed Longinus. In place of a weak little State requiring the protection of his country, he found the Venetians a fierce and self-reliant people. He could obtain only a very vague promise from the diplomatic Venetians. They would acknowledge the Emperor as overlord, they said, but only on their word of honour: they would take no oath of fealty. Still, the rule of the Lombard over Venice was of longer duration than that of any other State.

A great trouble beset Venice at about this period. When the first settlers began work on the islands, each little group had a separate life, its people retaining as far as possible the customs, the religion, and the constitution of their ruined homes on the mainland. The largest townships which sprang up on the Lido were Heraclea, Jesolo, and Malamocco. These gradually grew together into a federation of twelve communes, each governed by its own tribune; and the tribunes had regularly a general assembly for the settlement of such business as affected the common interests of the lagoon. Jealousy and civil feuds, however, sprang up among the islanders, as one after another endeavoured to acquire supremacy. Heraclea tried to take the lead, and to destroy Jesolo; but she in her turn was attacked, and razed to the ground, by Malamocco. The civil trouble well-nigh caused the destruction of Venice. The tribunes intrigued; family rose against family, clan against clan; and there was terrible bloodshed. For nearly two years and a half the Republic was in anarchy. The constitutional evil sapped the general prosperity, obstructed trade and industries, and brought property to havoc. Had it continued much longer, the people would have frittered their strength away

THE CUSTOM HOUSE AND CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE

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in private quarrels, and the State of Venice might never have emerged; but pressure from the mainland was brought to bear on Venice, and it became necessary for the various committees to consolidate as one body and sweep away the perils that were confronting them. The Lombards were becoming bolder and bolder. The Monarchy grew and grew, and at last the Republic of Venice feared that it might desire to add the islands of the Adriatic to its dominions.

This awoke Venice from lethargy. It was the peril of the sea that formed and completed her. The pressure was very severe. East and West were beginning to ask her very plainly to choose on which side and under whose protection she intended to place herself, and they did not intend to wait long for an answer. Venice, subtle and diplomatic, put off the evil hour as long as she possibly could; but her policy became obvious soon. She could no longer feign fealty first to one Empire and then to another, and meanwhile struggle for independence. The time had come for action. The critical moment was at hand. Either she must put herself under protection of the East or of the West, or declare her independence. Any course was dangerous, perhaps fatal. Out of the three

possible issues, Venice chose the most perilous, severing herself from both East and West. The result was fortunate. Thrown upon her own resources, she saved herself by energy.

King Pippin invited Venice to join in a war. Venice refused, and prepared to defend herself, trusting in the courage of her men and the intricacy of the lagoon. From north and south King Pippin could concentrate his forces upon Venice, and victory seemed easy; but he had forgotten the natural defences of the sea-bound city. He did not know the shoals and deeps of the sea home. A life's study would scarcely have taught him. A certain noble assumed the lead of the Venetian people. He commanded them to remove their wives, children, and goods to a little island in mid lagoon — Rialto, impregnable from land or sea. This done, the fighting men took up positions on the outlying islands, and awaited the attack of the Franks. Pippin seized on Brondolo, Chioggia, and Palestrina, and tried to press his squadron on to the capital; but the shoals stopped him. His ships ran aground; his pilots missed the channels; and the Venetians pelted them with darts and stones. For six months Pippin struggled; but the Venetians kept him at bay by their network

AT CHIOGGIA

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of canals and their oozy mud-banks. They shook off every assault. In the summer there came a rumour that an Eastern fleet was approaching. Pippin tried one more appeal to the Venetians, begging them to own themselves his subjects. "For are you not within the borders of my kingdom?" he said. "We are resolved to be the subjects of the Roman Emperor," they answered, "and not of you." The King was forced to retire. This great victory seemed to have the effect of consolidating the Venetians effectively. They agreed thenceforward to work together for the common cause. War had completed the union of Venice. She had emerged from her trial an independent State. There was no more internal discord. Venetian men and Venetian lagoons had made and saved the State. The spirit of the waters, free, vigorous, and pungent, had passed during the strife into the being of the people.

This triumph was really the birth hour of Venice, and the people look back upon it with joy. The victory over King Pippin is cherished to this day as one of the finest events in history. The Venetians realised the peril of the sea from this attack. Also they realised the peril of the mainland from the Hunnish invasion. They then

effected a compromise, and chose as the future home of their State a group of islands mid-way between the sea and the land, then known as Rialto, but thenceforth to bear the proud name of Venice. Venice in this union of her people declared her nature, so infinitely various, rich, pliant, and free, that to this day she awakens and in some measure satisfies a passion such as we feel for some person deeply beloved. Her people then struggled to attain from infancy to manhood. For the first time they had learned their own power, and union gave them strength. They began to create their Constitution, that singular monument of rigidity and durability which endured, with hardly a break in its structure, for ten centuries. They built with vigour and enthusiasm that incomparably lovely city of the sea. The aristocracy of Venice emerged. Her empire extended, following the lines of her commerce, in the East. St. Mark was substituted for St. Theodore as patron saint. The crusades were used as a means to conquer Dalmatia, and to plant the lion in the Greek Archipelago. Venice clashed with Genoa, and emerged victorious. Wealth flowed into her State coffers and her private banks. The island of Rialto proved the advantage of its situation, and established a claim

CHURCH OF SAN GEREMIA

ПВКУВА
МВПС
МЕАДОВК

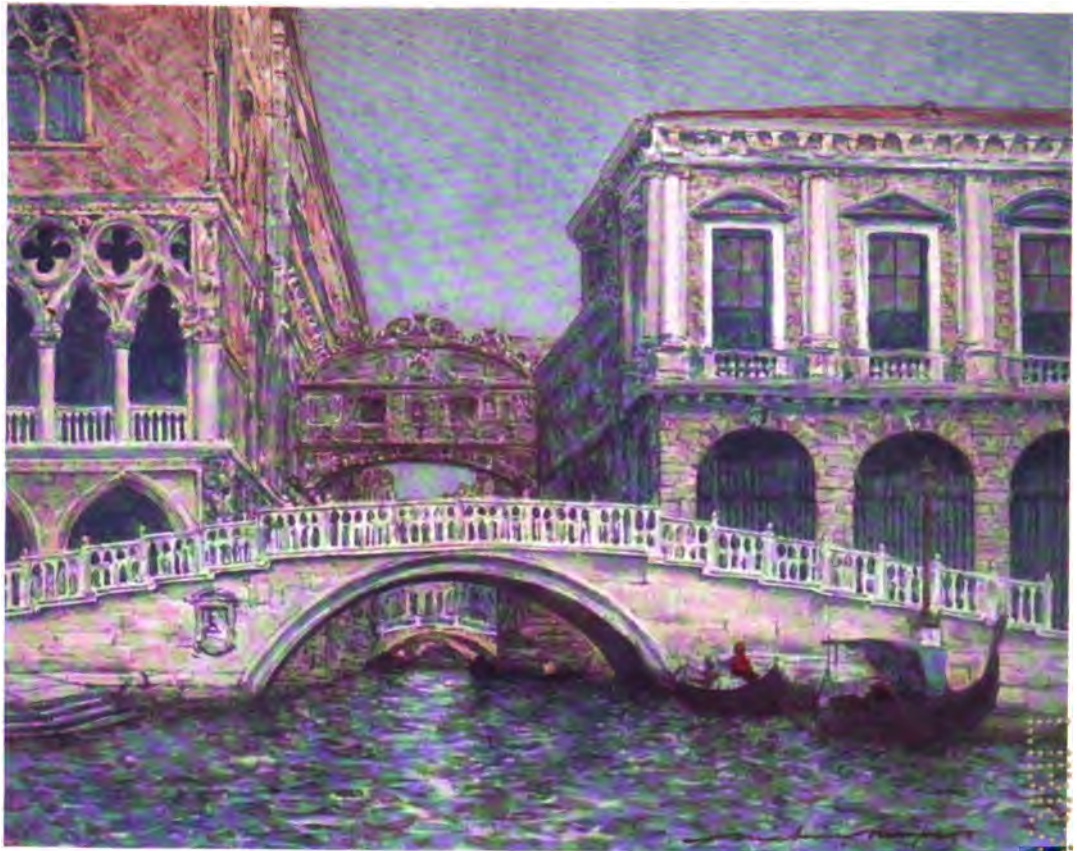
for gratitude as the asylum of Venice in her hour of need. The Venetians had seen that the mainland was unsafe, and the attack of Pippin showed that there was danger on the sea. Thus, experience leading to the choice of the middle point, in 810 the seat of the Government was removed to Rialto under Angelo Badoer as Doge. Rialto became a sacrament of reconciliation between Heraclea and Malamocco. It was the glory of Venice that of all parts of Italy she alone remained unscathed by the foreign ravages of the fifth century and the conquest of the eighth. Venice alone was left out of all Italy's ruin. She alone escaped pure and undefiled.

This marvellous period of her history — the repulses of the Franks and the creation of her State — requires no embellishments; yet the Venetians loved to gather a mythology of persons and events. Cannon-balls of bread, they say, were fired into the Frankish camp in mockery of Pippin's hope of strong Rialto surrendering. Then, again, there are the stories of the old woman who lured the invader to his final effort when half his forces were lost; of the canal Orfano, which ran with foreign blood, and won its name from the countless Frankish hordes that day made desolate; of the sword of Charles, which was flung into the

sea when the Emperor acknowledged his repulse and cried, "As this my brand sinks out of sight, nor ever shall rise again, so let all thoughts of conquering Venice fade from out men's hearts, or they will feel, as I have felt, the heavy displeasure of God." All these stories were absolutely untrue; but they were born of a pardonable pride.

The Venetians held their country in a singularly powerful devotion. Possibly this was because they were so closely shut in on these few little islands, precious morsels of land snatched from the devouring sea. Certain it is that they toiled for the State as no other nation has toiled before or since. They were determined that Venice should be great, that she should be beautiful; and century after century of Venetians devoted their lives to this work, sinking their own interests in hers. The Republic was before everything. Wherever one goes in Florence, one finds traces of great and famous men of all periods and of all crafts — painters, poets, writers, statesmen, — in every square, in every street, you are reminded of them; their spirits and their works live with you wherever you may go. But in Venice, where are they? There is the city—yes: there is that; and there are the archives, the annals of the city,

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS AND STRAW BRIDGE



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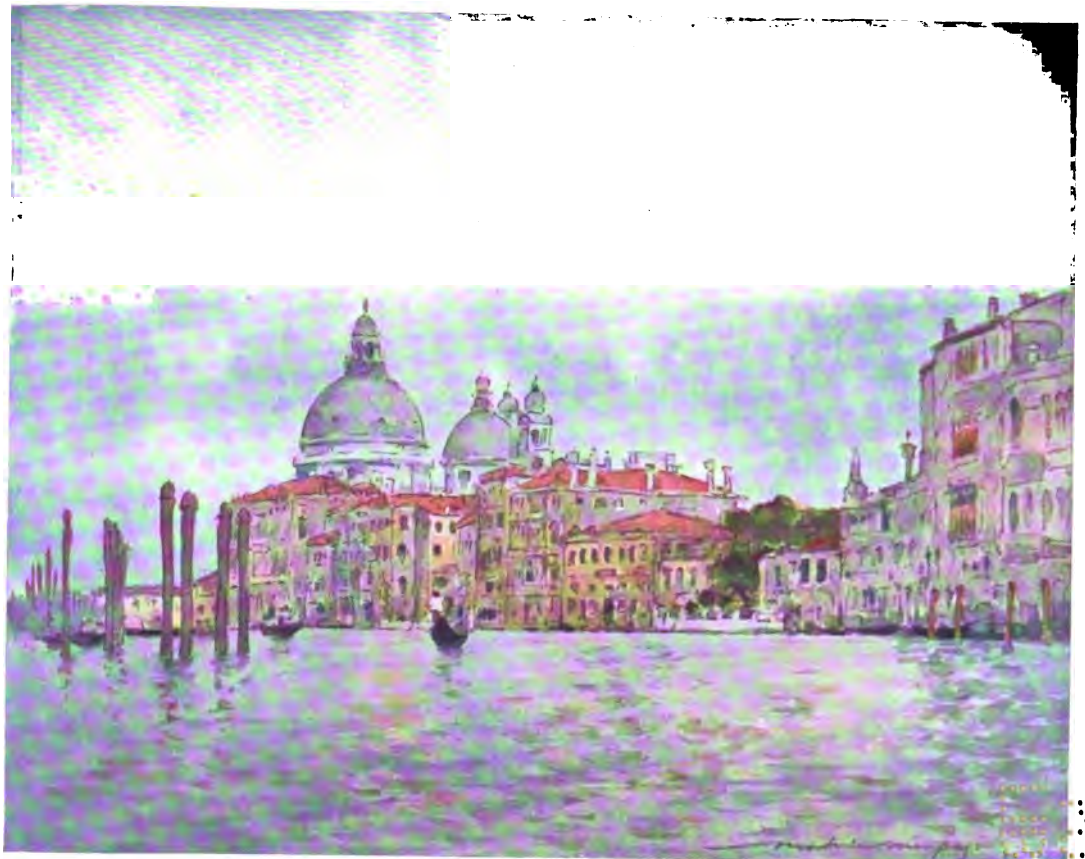
histories without number, marvellous histories;—but the familiar figures, the great men that we honour and look for,—they are not here. Venice herself was the centre of all their aspirations, all their affections. She was erected as would be a treasure-heap: all the choicest and all the best were there. One knows but little, for example, of the great painters—the men, with beautiful thoughts, who filled the churches and the palaces with untold splendour, glowing sunshine. Their works are left, and their names; but no more. It seems as if they must have kept one another down, that Venice alone might shine.

If one wishes to study the history of Venice, there is no difficulty. Historic documents without number are accessible. Every period, every vogue, every year, is carefully studied and commented upon by keen observers, men of the greatest talents. These records glow with life and energy. In quite early days, when the Republic was in its infancy,—when there was no aristocracy, no great and powerful State,—even the fishermen and the merchants and the salt manufacturers had a longing to chronicle the doings of the community. The palaces which were being built, and the churches,—all these they wished to have

chronicled for ever. Numberless historians there were, and all nameless — men of extraordinary skill and genius. Embellishments and fables abound; but on the whole these histories, written with great realism, bring back a vivid picture of the State. No Venetian ever tires, ever did tire, of the history of his country. It is the one subject that is of endless interest to him. The trade of Venice, her ceremonies, her treaties, her money, the speeches of her orators—all are chronicled.

Venice was looked upon by Italy very much as we look upon America. She had no long and glorious history—at least, no history of anything beyond handicraft—no literature, no ancient manuscripts. The Florentines, on the other hand, had a great enthusiasm for ancient history. They were proud of their descent, and gloried in looking back to a long Etruscan civilisation. When one visits Florence, there is no difficulty in gathering knowledge concerning her great men of any period. Their shadows walk in her streets; their memories will never fade. You meet them everywhere—the painters, the monks, the gallants, the statesmen,—the individualities of the men who were the makers of Florence. The Venetians had no sympathy with the Florentines. They could not under-

ON THE GRAND CANAL



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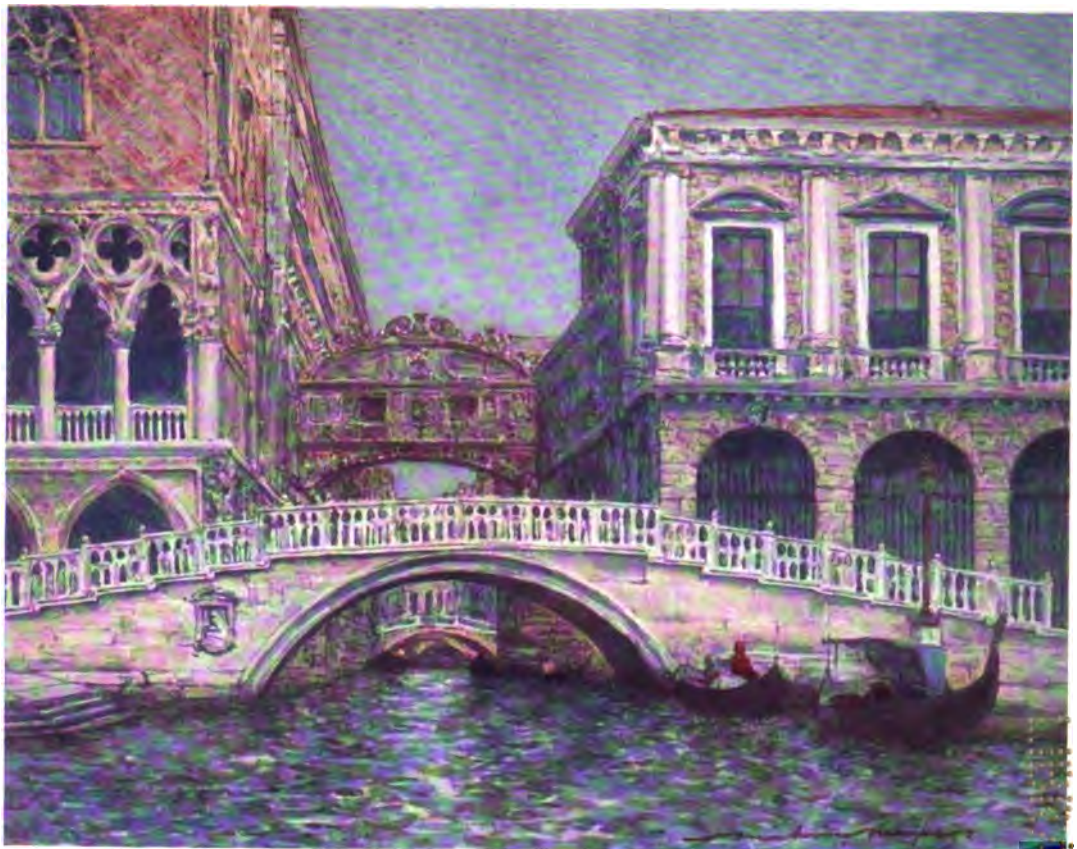
stand the Florentine desire to live with the past rather than the present. There are very few names which stand out prominently in the history of Venice, names concerning which a great deal is known; but there are one or two stories that are picturesque and popular, stories which are ever fresh to the Venetians. One is of a prince, the beheaded Doge Marino Faliero, — not at all an important incident in Venetian history, but one that is very dear to the hearts of the people, because of its melancholy. The prince was a man of hasty temper and haughty nature, and could brook no slight to his dignity. Once a bishop kept him waiting, and that worthy, for his misdemeanour, received, to the astonishment of everyone, a sound box on the ear. Before he came to the throne, Faliero was of great service to the State. He was offered the throne of Venice at the age of seventy-six, and married a young and beautiful woman. The story runs that a young gallant called Michele Steno, having been turned out of her presence, insulted the lady and her husband by pinning an impudent message to the chair of the Doge. The young man was brought before the "Forty," excused on the plea of his age and impetuosity, condemned to prison for



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A GLIMPSE INTO BOHEMIA

EARLY MORNING

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A GLIMPSE INTO BOHEMIA

On one occasion we arrived at Venice early in the morning. I was frightened at the darkness and the stillness, and the tall black houses looming high above us: it seemed that brigands must be lurking there, ready to murder us. Absolute silence reigned, except for mysterious sounds as if melodious voices were calling a refractory dog—"Puppy," "Puppy," "Puppy," we heard on every side. It was the warning of the gondoliers as they passed one another in the darkness. I longed for some accustomed natural noise. If only something would fall and make a splash! The silence set one's nerves on edge. We hired a gondola, and glided swiftly and silently out into the darkness, our gondolier's ringing voice joining the chorus of "Puppy." And so dexterously did he handle his dainty craft that, even as we turned corners and passed other gondolas in the pitch-

black darkness, not a sound was made, not a splash. I felt like beating the water with the palms of my hands to make a disturbance. This silent gliding went on for about twenty minutes, until suddenly we drew up by an enormous silver-grey palace down a side canal, one of the largest palaces in Venice, with broad marble steps and badly-made deal doors. After some time the doors were opened, and an old lady appeared, bowing and talking in rapid Italian. She led us up the steps and through a colossal hall of marble, all marble, with staircases on either side leading on to spacious landings, into a suite of rooms that seemed more like the state apartments of a king than those of an ordinary hotel.

One of the first things I did when I awoke in the morning was to get out on to the roof of the palace and look about me. I always ask to be directed on to the roof when I arrive at a new place. And there I remained the whole morning, painting, deaf to the pleadings of my friends that I should come down and eat. It was the chimneys that fascinated me! From the decorative standpoint they were quite startling. Chimneys, chimneys, everywhere, and such chimneys — grouped into pictures in every direction! There were

PALACE IN A BY-CANAL

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clusters of twos, and clusters of threes; and wherever there were spaces that could be used for decoration they were used to the full. Each one of these chimneys seemed to have its own particular character. Some bulged out at the top in graceful lines; some were square and stolid; others were light and airy. At the base of some bloomed a blaze of flowers from the roof gardens. Each one was different. When I learned that a book had been published on the chimneys of Venice I was not in the least surprised.

When my friends were able to tear me away from chimneys we got into our gondola and allowed the gondolier to take us where he pleased, to drift about in the by-canals. I wanted my impressions of Venice to be quite haphazard. We glided in the gondola past marble palaces—green palaces, pink palaces, blue palaces, all toned and variegated with age. Venice struck me as being a highly-coloured city, the most brilliantly coloured I had ever seen. It was not, as most cities are, merely a background for brightly-dressed figures: the buildings themselves were coloured, and the gondolas and the figures were black and sombre. Every wall, every doorway, was coloured. We glided past a series of crazy old doorways of

blues, greens, and vermilions. Each door was broken with many changes of colour, and the red, rusty ironwork above, just where it caught the sun, was of a rich golden sienna. Certainly Venice is the most highly-coloured city in the world. How different from the impressions one finds in Bond Street—the vicious water-colours in which the artist always insists on orange and vermilion sails and crisp, flowing reflections that have been painted on slanting tables: the water-colours that are so sought after and so saleable! That Venice is vividly coloured I admit; but there is a scumble over the city. Age has toned it. The pink palace reflected in the green water is totally unlike the pink palace of the blobby water-colours. There are blues, and violets, and old-rose tones, and a certain bloom in it that these artists never seem to give. And to a certain extent these pictures handicap one: one feels annoyed to think that Venice should be so caricatured. You see the Bridge of Sighs at daybreak; you see the Salute by moonlight; and somehow you cannot forget these eternal water-colours. There is a certain resemblance, sufficient to irritate.

Indolence was upon us. Already we were becoming apathetic. There was something about the

THE ORANGE DOOR

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atmosphere that encouraged a delightful languor. The residents said it was the sirocco. The sirocco seemed answerable for many deficiencies: it was always being blamed. Later, when we came in touch with the artists, we found that it was the normal excuse for not working. We discovered groups of them sitting about in the square drinking, and when we asked them if they had done any work they all said, "No: there is a sirocco on now: of course, we can't work." Venice is overrun with artists; yet how few you see at work! Here and there you will find a stray one in a gondola painting, but very rarely. We were drifting about idly. Our gondolier was quite a part of the picture—young, very handsome, with a musical voice. And I began in a dreamy way to muse as I watched him. My thoughts went back for the moment to the Thames—to an old gentleman toiling in a punt. He was once a handsome young gondolier like this one, gracefully piloting a gondola through the canals of Venice; but now he had grown old on the Thames. There is no doubt that the gondola is made for Venice: it is futile to try it elsewhere. And then the colour is right. The gondola ought to be black. It became so naturally and as a

matter of economy. People used to spend too much money on their gondolas, and colours had to be forbidden.

I was in a dreamy mood, and I began to wonder what became of the handsome young gondoliers—they were all handsome and all young. They could not remain so for ever. What became of the old ones? I soon learnt. When gondoliers grew to be too old for their tasks they drifted on to the landing-stages. There we saw them, with marvellous crooks, catching the gondolas and drawing them into the proper places. I examined these sticks, and was surprised to find that some of them were of very great value. The gondolier prizes and decorates his stick just as a bootblack tends his stand: only, where the bootblack has coppers and bits of tinsel, the Venetian has pure gold coins dating back to the time of the Doges. This love of collecting and cherishing beautiful things is characteristic of the peasant people of Venice. Women will spend their savings in inches of gold chain, which they join together into long strings, and sometimes a woman will have festoons of gold chain collected for two or three generations. It is their way of investing money.

We drifted along all the afternoon through the

canals, being hooked on to different landing-stages by these old gentlemen; and we came to the conclusion that this was really the end of our handsome gondolier. We were anxious to meet the artists of Venice, and had been told of a certain restaurant, the Panada, where they generally congregated.

In the evening, then, we landed, and went thither to dine. The artists who went to the Panada, we had been told, were those who had "let themselves go" more or less—who had been taken hold of by the sirocco and had settled down to loafing. When they first arrived in Venice they went to wine-shops, little dark places, and dined off macaroni and harsh drink. The Panada was more or less organised for the convenience of artists. In the first place, you were not bored by having to tip waiters—a duty that is always trying to an artist who is in between two exhibitions. And nearly all the Panada artists were in that condition. They had nearly all had exhibitions in Bond Street which had been "great artistic successes"—in other words, they hadn't sold any pictures. Another point about the Panada that appealed to the artist was that his bills could run on indefinitely. The bills did run: in fact, the

only things that seemed to be at all active in Venice, in spite of the sirocco, were the bills. The Panada was a paradise! Who could resist it? The cooking was excellent, as cooking must always be where painters are, for they are very particular people. The Panada was perfect; the Panada had a sanded floor; the Panada was the noisiest restaurant in Italy. It was our first experience of Bohemia, the painter's world, in Venice; and we sat there, over our untouched dinner, fascinated—fascinated by the general noise and confusion, fascinated even by the unsavoury smells. It was not clean; there was a great deal of smoke, and so much talk! The guests seemed to be screaming and talking at once in all the languages of the world. Two words I heard continually—"breadth" and "simplicity." Here and there was a little talk of "mediums" and "technique," but not much. It was generally broad principles that were discussed. There was no mistaking these groups of men. They were artists to their finger-tips in everything save work. They dressed like artists, talked like artists, and behaved like the artists one reads about in novels: the Ouida artists. They wore neckties reaching down to their waists, collars two sizes too large and cut very low; their hands

AN OLD DOORWAY

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were always a little soiled, and their finger-nails never quite clean. The waiters also were soiled. They were very toney indeed, and very apathetic—toes turned inwards, heads bent slightly forward. They were dejected from want of variety: there was no uncertainty in the Panada as to tips. They came in on the aggregate and received lump sums; but there was a general depression about the people that waited. All were soiled at the Panada—the waiters, the artists, and the linen. But we very soon began to talk of this dirt as tone, and then it didn't seem to matter so much. Everything seemed to be worked on more or less artistic principles. There were quaint decorative dishes. The puddings were pink; the butter was stained; and altogether it required great habits to enjoy food at the Panada. By perseverance, I was told, it was possible to acquire an appetite. There were tables of different sizes, and groups of artists belonging to different sects — some antagonistic, some sympathetic: Dottists, and Spottists, and Stripists. Sometimes when the Dottists and Spottists happened to be friends for the minute they would join their tables together and make one long one. But this was only now and then. Usually the groups in the Panada were formed of

twos. Often genius sat alone. Now and then, when a big picture was sold, the restaurant was very festive: the artist had a dinner-party, to which everyone had been invited. But generally it was a small water-colour that was sold, and the party went off to a small café down by a side canal. There was one man who got himself up to look like King Charles, and he was King Charles to the life! Long hair rested on his shoulders, and an enormous tie adorned his neck; his trousers and waistcoat were fringed, and his boots and beard were pointed. He had a coat of velvet that through age had become marked with an opalescent mottle. If he stood in front of an age-toned palace you never knew which was coat and which was palace. He possessed no earthly goods, but paid his way all over the world by painting portraits. He would either cut you out in black paper for fivepence or draw an elaborate portrait in pastel for one franc fifty. This celebrated man came up to us, and began to paint our portraits. Before we knew where we were he had cut out, dry-pointed, and stippled us; and melted away, leaving behind him a whole tableful of works of art, side by side with his bill. Then another man introduced himself to us, and explained that this was quite the

AN UNFREQUENTED CANAL

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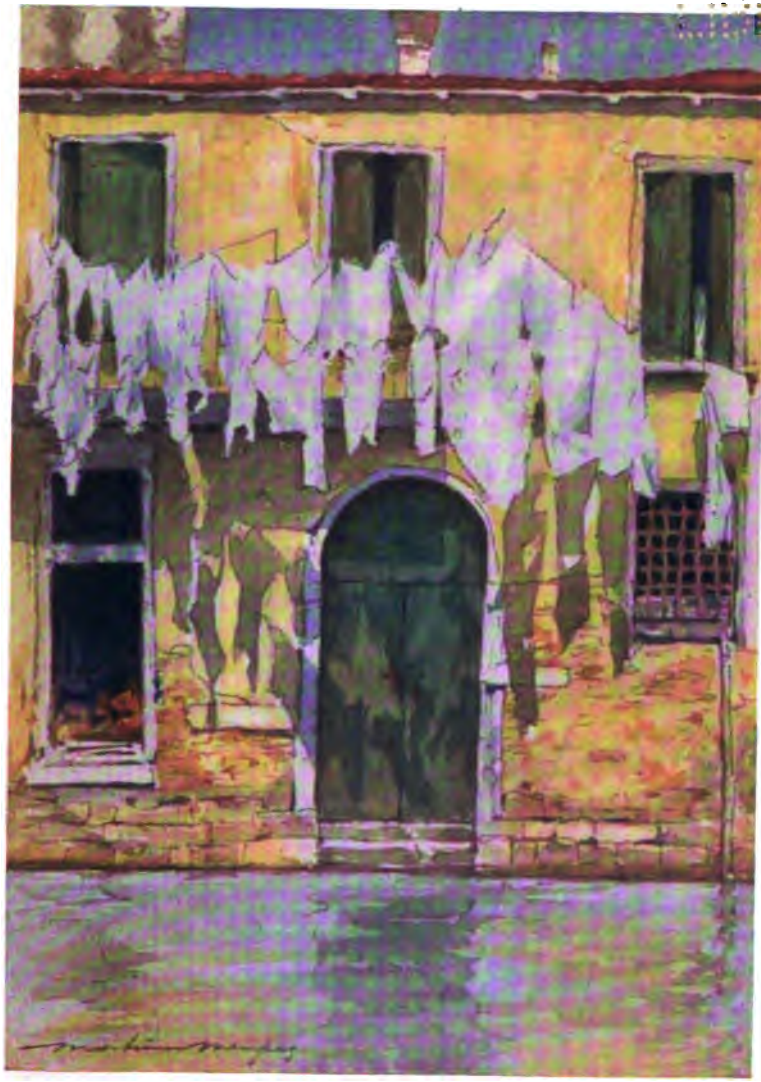

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usual thing for "King Charles" to do. He pointed out how romantic and interesting it all was: he seemed quite convinced that the place was full of romance.

For us Bohemia had lost its romance. We felt that we had been green, grass-green, and that (to use a vulgarism) the gilt was off the gingerbread. The room was becoming stuffy; the Bohemians were noisy and dishonest; and the waiters, no longer toney, were dirty. So we paid our own bill and "King Charles's," and left the Panada and romance for the open air.

In the piazza the band was playing the popular music that one knows so well from the barrel organs. Instinctively one thought of London, Soho, and performing monkeys. But this impression was swept away when I saw the picture that presented itself before me in St. Mark's. What an extraordinary change had come over the piazza since dinner! A swarm of locusts might have settled upon Venice — a dark, seething mass, clustering round the walls of St. Mark's and filling up every inch of space. They were pilgrims from Russia, thousands of them—men, women, and children—on their way to Rome—poor peasants who had saved up for this pilgrimage during their

whole lifetime, sleeping the sleep of the righteous, their bodies pressed close against the holy walls of St. Mark's as though for sympathy. It was a dark-coloured crowd, all dressed in black, with big capes and long boots and little astrachan caps,—a strong silhouette of black against the brilliant background of St. Mark's. It was a marvellous picture, and pathetic. These peasants seemed to be waiting for a greater, deeper joy, when they would be transformed to new creatures and fly back to their native land on the wings of a beautiful faith. The moon herself shone down upon them caressingly, lighting up many a weary, travel-worn face, turning their sombre hues to silvers, and greens, and violets. St. Mark's, with this dark mass of people at her base, seemed almost flippant by contrast.

This was a night of contrasts! The dirt and filth of the little restaurant, with its noisy Bohemians: and then the quiet night, a clear, bright, silvery blue night such as one only sees in Venice; the weary pilgrims and the sumptuous cathedral; the dainty lightness and gracefulness of St. Mark's and the broad, simple, strong tower rearing her head into the sky—the Campanile, now, alas! no more than a memory. It was a picture such as you see but once in a lifetime. This building of

ST. MARK'S BASIN

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precious stones, one of the most beautiful in the world, so rich with gold and mosaic, jewels, marbles, and lapis lazuli, that even in the cold blue light of the moon and a few dim gas-lamps it seemed to be dancing and sparkling with colour,—this, and the sleeping peasants in their rags—what a contrast!

Then, again, what a contrast suddenly to turn from these dark groups to the jewellers' shops and the huge windows full of glittering Venetian glass! To see the gaily-dressed crowds sipping their coffee outside Florian's famous café that had never been closed during three hundred years! Here was nothing but brightness and gaiety. An excellent band played in the middle of the piazza. Smartly-dressed young men and military officers in pale blue uniform strolled about the square, quite conscious that they were being regarded favourably by girls and their mothers sitting at the coffee-tables. Florian's was an ideal place for the artist. It was never shut. It was quite the fashionable thing to drink coffee there after dinner, and one had the chance of talking to one's friends and acquaintances. Fascinating fruits were brought round to us—grapes, and figs, and almonds dipped in caramel sugar and stuck on to sticks. The men smoked cigars as long as those smoked in Burma. So

capacious were they that they put them on little stoves in the way a woman heats her curling-tongs, and by the time they had drunk their coffee the cigars were probably alight.

When the band had stopped playing we went to Bauer's to drink beer. And so ended a typical day in the life of an artist in that most fascinating city on the waters.

Thanks to the kindness of Mr. Bozzi, the manager of the well-known Danieli's Hotel, who often piloted me about the intricate network of streets, I became familiar with many of the unfrequented quarters, which, as a rule, remain absolutely unknown to the tourist.

HOTEL DANIELI

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ARCHITECTURE

PORTA DELLA CARTA

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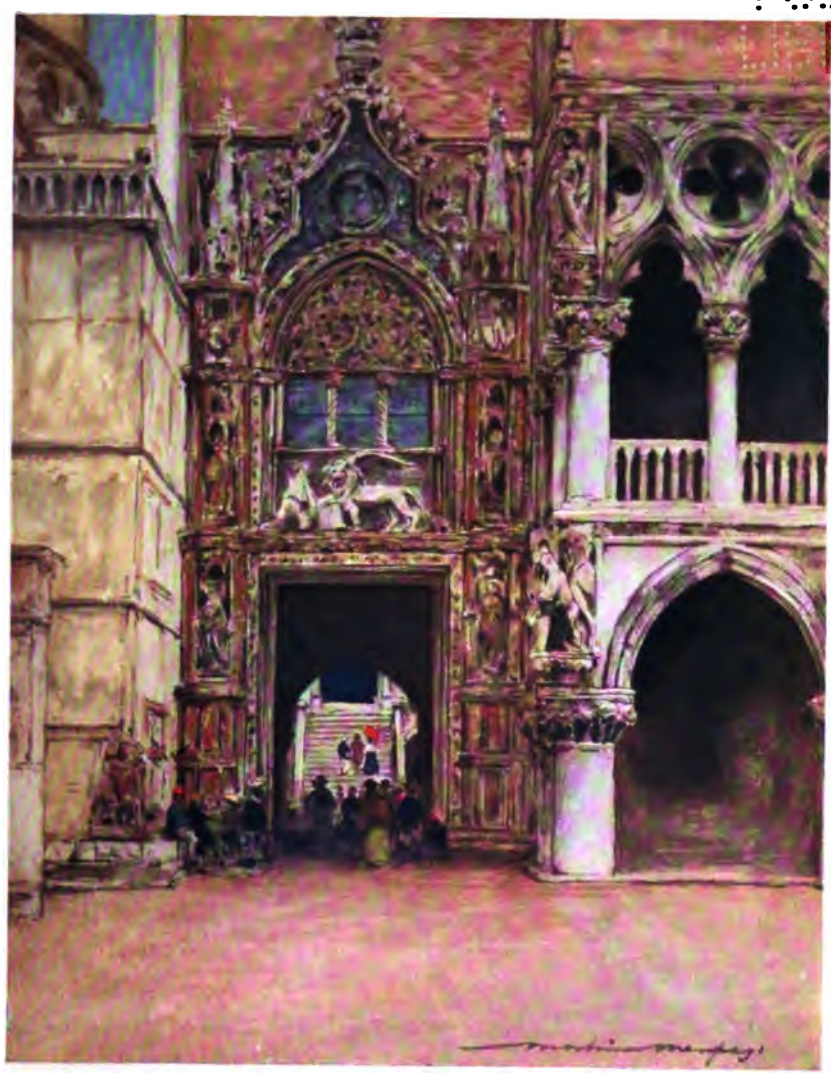

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ARCHITECTURE

In architecture one finds a history of Venice. It is the most definite expression, the most faithful embodiment, of the local genius. It presents realistically the daily life and thought and work of a bygone race. The intense love of the early Venetians for colour shows itself in the gleaming gold, the veined marble, and the white sculpture. Another of their affections is symbolised by the frequent introduction of children in the sculptured works. There are children of all periods, of all appearances, illustrating various of the changes in thought and in ideals that were continually coming to pass. Those of the earlier time are sturdy, strapping youngsters, with a purposeful look about them; whereas the children of the fifteenth century are fat, chubby, and uninteresting.

In the early stage of her history Venice was a Greek rather than an Italian city, and her buildings

were of Byzantine type. That is easily explained. During her first great period Venice was connected by sea with Constantinople and the East, but cut off by the lagoons and marshes from Lombardy and the rest of Italy. Only a few of the Byzantine buildings remain. The period is principally marked by the precious stones and coloured marbles encrusted in the brickwork, and by the ancient reliefs inserted in the blank walls of churches and houses. Among Byzantine buildings St. Mark's comes first. The existing building began to be constructed at the close of the tenth century; and Byzantine architects worked at it for nearly a hundred years. It was largely remodelled afterwards, and was altered in decoration during the different reactions of architecture; but the bulk of it belongs to the early period, and is in the pure Byzantine style. Parts of it remind one greatly of St. Sophia in Constantinople, on the lines of which, I believe, St. Mark's was partially modelled. There were many Gothic additions in the shape of pinnacles and pointed gables above the chief arches, just sufficient intrusion of the Gothic element to add a touch of bizarre extravagance; and in the sixteenth century many of the old mosaics were superseded by jejeune Renaissance compositions, of no decorative value,

GRAND CANAL LOOKING TOWARDS THE DOGANA

ПВЧУВА
МВПС
МЕЛАОН

incongruous with the general scheme. Nevertheless, the church as a whole, as I have said, still remains essentially Byzantine. The main fabric of the façade represents the original Byzantine Romanesque building, and is in almost every particular similar to the picture of the church given in the thirteenth-century mosaic. The turreted pinnacles and the false gables are Gothic additions of the fifteenth century—merely screens of decoration with no roof behind. The building is truly Oriental. In the shape of a Greek cross with four equal arms, it faces west, and has a high altar and a presbytery at the east end. It was first of all the domestic chapel of the Doge's Palace, and then the shrine of the body of St. Mark the Evangelist. Everywhere one sees the motto, "Pax tibi, Marce, Evangelista mea" ("Peace to thee, Mark, my Evangelist"). There are the symbols of all the four evangelists,—Luke, a bull; Mark, a lion; John, an eagle; Matthew, an angel. There are scenes from the life of Christ—the Adoration of the Magi and Annunciation to the shepherds.

Venice in the Byzantine period must have been a city of great architectural wealth and splendour, —far in advance of other Italian towns, although, of course, destitute of the engineering glories of

France and Germany. One can tell this by the few remaining Byzantine palaces,—very few of them are purely Byzantine. There is the magnificent Palazzo Loredan, one of the most beautiful of all the palaces on the Grand Canal, and a splendid example of the Byzantine Romanesque period. It has about it a distinct tinge of Oriental feeling; the capitals of some of the columns are exquisitely beautiful, and there are not many Gothic alterations. Next to this palace comes the Palazzo Farsetti, Romanesque of the twelfth century, simpler in style and with less ornamentation. It is really more nearly pure Romanesque than Byzantine, and shows no Oriental influence whatever. It is graceful and dignified. The "Fondaco dei Turchi," a very early Byzantine Romanesque palace, assumed its name in the seventeenth century, when it was let to the Turkish merchants of Venice. Originally a twelfth-century palace, it has recently been so much restored as to have lost all its air of antiquity and the greater part of its earlier interest, although it still represents symbolically the splendid homes of the Byzantine period. It is much like St. Mark's, and is the only surviving example of a building all in one style. The arches, the capitals,

A FAMOUS PALAZZO

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the shafts, the parapets and decorative plaques, are modernised, to be sure; but they are typical if not original, and give one a very good idea of what the Grand Canal must have been like before the invasion of the Gothic style and the Renaissance.

One gleans a very good idea by means of these palaces of how extremely civilised and peaceful Venice must have been at that early period. In northern Europe the homes of mediæval nobles were dark and gloomy castles built mainly for defence, having single heavy oak doors studded with nails, and great iron gates and drawbridges; there were no openings in the ground floors, and the windows above were small and grated. For Venice such fortifications were unnecessary. Her palaces were airy and graceful; for she was protected from the outside by her moat of lagoons, and from the inside by her strong internal Government. These ancient buildings, the "Fondaco dei Turchi" and the rest, were even then gentlemen's palaces, always open and undefended, the homes of pleasure, with free means of access, broad arcades, plenty of light, and presenting a general air of peace and security.

It is interesting to notice the later Venetian

architecture (as exhibited in the Libreria and the Procuratie Vecchie), developed from this early open and airy style. The native Venetian ideal seems to have traversed all styles, and persisted through them all in spite of endless architectural changes. The Grand Canal was the street of the nobles—the finest street in the world, in the way of architectural beauties. From end to end there are palaces of all periods, from the Byzantine time to the eighteenth century, and all are palaces of the ancient Venetian nobility. The Grand Canal is to Venice what the Strand is to London and the Rue St. Honoré to Paris. It is the most wonderful street in the world. There is nothing so bizarre, so fairy-like, to be seen in any other city through the length and breadth of the globe. It is a marvellous book wherein every family of the Venetian nobility has signed its name. Every wall tells a story; every house is a palace; each was erected by some well-known architect. Pietro Lombardo, Scamozzi, Sansovino, Sammichele (the Veronese), Selva, Vissenti—these were the men who drew the plans and directed the construction of the houses; but unknown architects of the Middle Ages built some of the most picturesque.

There were palaces of all styles. After a palace

ENTRANCE TO THE GRAND CANAL

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of the Renaissance comes one belonging to the Middle Ages in Gothic Arab style, much like the Ducal Palace, with balconies, lancet windows, and trefoils. Then there will be a palace adorned with great plaques or medallions of differently coloured marbles; anon a great bare sweep of rose-toned wall. All styles are here — Byzantine, Saracen, Lombard, Gothic, Roman, Greek, and Rococo— fanciful capitals, Greek cupolas, mosaic and bas-relief, classic severity combined with the elegant fantasy of the Renaissance.

It is a gallery open to the sky, full of the art of seven or eight centuries. Think of the genius and money and talent expended on this one street by brilliant artists and munificent patrons! The Grand Canal was originally one of the navigable channels by whose aid the waters found their way, through the mud-banks, past the mouth of the Lido to the open sea. It is the original deep water which first created Venice. Up this canal the commerce of all countries used to reach the city in the days of her splendour. The Rialto, the most beautiful bridge in Venice, bestrides the canal in a single span. It was built by Antonio da Ponte. There are two rows of shops upon it; and one of the most picturesque scenes in the Grand Canal

lies round about it—old houses with platformed roofs, bulging balconies, and stairways with disjointed steps.

It is interesting to watch how Byzantine architecture gave place to Gothic when Venice began to conquer on the Italian mainland. Thus Gothic architecture came in, and the conquest of Padua and Verona completed it. The term "Gothic" is very elastic; but there are certain points by which one can tell whether a building is Gothic or not. It is Gothic if the roof rises in a steep gable high above the walls; if the principal windows and doors have pointed arches and gables; if it has a steep roof; if the arches are foliated—that is to say, if the shapes of different leaves are cut into the stone to form a species of delicate tracery like lacework, letting in the daylight. Foliation is especially characteristic of Gothic architecture; some of the windows in Westminster Abbey are foliated. Gothic architecture is very rough and loose and irregular; yet it has a wonderful tenderness and variation of design. Changeableness and variety are the great requirements of perfect architecture. One should be enabled to derive just as much pleasure and instruction from looking at a perfect piece of architecture as from reading one of the

PANORAMA SEEN FROM ST. MARK'S BASIN

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finest of classic books. Gothic architecture is essentially truthful and naturalistic. The architects of this period were peculiarly fond of vegetation, which is a sign of gentleness and refinement of mind. Gothic is principally independent. It juts out continually with many pinnacles; there is nothing broad, or uniform, or smooth, about a Gothic building; it is variable, rough, and jutting, though, nevertheless, graceful in the extreme. The materials were rougher then than in the time of the Byzantine architecture, and to atone for this it was necessary to introduce much workmanship.

The artists were enthusiastic in their love of Nature, and felt deeply all her changing and complex moods. For example, you may see the difference between a Renaissance and a Gothic palace by imagining the surroundings of the former, its background, gone. It would then be deprived of its charm; whereas if you took a Gothic palace and placed it anywhere, it would still be beautiful.

The Ducal Palace expresses the Gothic spirit to perfection. It was the great work of Venice at this period. The best architects, the best labourers, and the best painters were employed in beautifying it. At one time the palace fell into decay, and it was obvious to everyone that it should be rebuilt

and enlarged. But the alteration would be extremely expensive. Therefore a law was passed preventing anyone suggesting such alterations unless he had previously paid one thousand ducats to the State. At last a man arose who cared not for the thousand ducats, and suggested the necessary alterations. The palace was then rebuilt. It was palace, prison, senate-house, and office of public business, all in one. There were thirty-six great pillars supporting the lower stories alone, all decorated in the richest possible manner. There was no end to the fantasies of the sculptors at that period—exquisite curves, studied outlines, graceful but complex, solid and strong and beautifully proportioned braided work; lilies and flowers of all kinds intertwined. Much of the sculpture is snow-white, with gold as a background; some of it has glass mosaic let into the hollows. The cross is used a good deal; also the peacock, the vine, the dove.

The palace of Semitecolo has some beautiful early-Gothic windows, having false cusps in the arches, so as to make the head a trefoil. One sees here the gradual growth of the arch until it culminates in the Doge's Palace type. There are beautiful balustrades to the balconies, original and

THE DOGANA AND SALUTE

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belonging to the period. In the early-Gothic palaces one notices a certain softening of the angles —that is to say, in the fine fourteenth-century Gothic buildings. The early Gothic architecture has no cusps to the arches; it shows a transitional form between Venetian Romanesque and Venetian Gothic. There are first-floor arcades early-Gothic, with a somewhat Oriental curve in the arch derived by the early Venetian Gothics from Alexandria or Cairo. The capitals of the columns are characteristic of the period: there are dainty balconies with graceful, slender columns, and cusps to the arches.

These Gothic palaces were built by a people who were laborious, brave, practical, and prudent; yet they had great ideas of the refinement of domestic life, and the Gothic palaces remain to-day much the same as when they were newly built—marble balconies, great strong sweeps of delicate-looking tracery, clustered arches. It is the Gothic window that is so perfect, so strong,—built, too, with material that was by no means good.

There is so much rivalry, vanity, dishonesty, in the present day, that houses are badly and cheaply built; even in the best of them, bad iron and inferior plaster are used. How many of them, I should like to know, will be standing fifty years

hence? Mr. Ruskin is much against our modern windows and the manner in which they are quickly constructed out of bad materials, and the bricks all placed one on top of the other slanting anyhow. The doors of Gothic palaces are all semicircular above. At one time the name of the family was placed over the entrance, and a prayer inserted for their safety and prosperity,—also a blessing for the stranger who should pass the threshold. Inside the houses there is always a large court round which all the various rooms circle, with a beautiful outside staircase supported on pointed arches with coned parapets and projecting landing-places. In the court there is always a well of marble superbly sculptured.

The centres of the early Renaissance architecture were Florence, Milan, and Venice. Venice is the only city in which important examples of all three periods of the Renaissance are to be found—the early period, the culminating period, and the period of decay. The Renaissance found better expression in Venice than elsewhere in Italy. In fact, when Florence and Rome had entered upon quite another period, Venice continued it for fully twenty-five years longer. The Venetians were ambitious, exceedingly so; and this ambition was

PALAZZO CONTARINI DEGLI SCRIGNI

a source of great trouble to the rest of Italy. The balance of power seemed, in their opinion, to be weighing too heavily in the direction of the Queen of the Adriatic; and the peace of the peninsula, they felt, was not by any means assured. The greatest period for Venice was at the end of the fifteenth century, when she had conquered all the land about her from Padua nearly to Milan, and seawards to Dalmatia and Crete. In the market-places of Padua, Vicenza, Verona, and Brescia, the Lion of St. Mark was set up as a sign of the subjugation. Even now one can trace the influence of Venice upon the art of these various places. But the Venetians certainly learnt a great deal from the people whom they conquered. Other influences were brought to bear upon Venetian architecture—as, for example, the Lombardi family, who probably belonged to some part of Lombardy. Venice seems at this time to have gathered unto herself many fine suggestions from the rest of Italy. In fact, Venice absorbed talent from the rest of the world. In quite early days she adopted Byzantine and Arabic architecture; then, in the sixteenth century, she took unto herself the art of the Milanese, who enriched the city with their work.

A truly Renaissance building did not appear in

Venice until sixty years after the first was erected in Florence, and then, strangely, it had little of the Florentine character. This, after all, is not extraordinary when one comes to think of the bitter war between Florence and Venice in 1467. She took her style of architecture from the countries which she had conquered and naturalised, such as the district of Lombardy; and in her turn she influenced them. The adoption of the Greek forms of Roman architecture which originated in Florence gradually spread and reached Venice; but the Venetians did not struggle, as did the Florentines, to revive and purify Roman architecture. Simply the tendency of the general taste inclined in that direction, and gave to their own Venetian forms of architecture a certain classic air. In the general form of the work of this period one cannot detect the classical influence; but, if you examine into it carefully, you will notice in small details, such as a capital, that some classical subject has been introduced in place of the usual symbolical one. You will also detect in purely Gothic composition signs of the new art influence. For example, in the mouldings there is an introduction of cupids among the foliage, and all the strange fables and gods of the heathen are represented

CHURCH OF THE JESUITS

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there. This was the period when people were becoming more learned. Later, buildings were erected on purely classical lines; yet they still kept to the Gothic arch. Bartolomeo Buono of Bergamo was one of the greatest architects of his time. In 1520 the work of another architect was noticeable —that of Guglielmo Bergamasco.

The question of the church exterior was one of the most difficult problems of the early-Renaissance architect, and he never solved it quite. The churches of Venice nearly all belong to the Renaissance; there were many of them rebuilt under the influence of either Palladian or Jesuit style. Palladio was a great architect; but he had nothing of the Catholic feeling. He was really more suited to build a pagan temple than to build a Christian church. The Jesuit style, moreover, is horrible, with its stumpy columns, bloated cherubs, unhealthy affectations, and fiery ornaments. It is a display without beauty or grace, merely overloaded and heavy. The church of the Scalzi is of extravagant richness. The walls are encrusted with coloured marble; there are frescoed ceilings by Tiepolo and Sansovino; bright tones prevail —more appropriate to a ballroom than to a house of prayer. One can quite imagine a minuet under

such a ceiling. Many of the churches in Italy are built in this style, and are compensated only by the number and interest of the valuable objects which they contain. Almost every church has a museum such as would honour the palace of a king. There one sees Titians, Paul Veroneses, Tintorettos, Palmas, Giovanni Bellinis, Bonifazios. The church of the Scalzi has a broad staircase in red brocatelle of Verona, with truncated columns in marble, gigantic prophets, stone balustrades, and doors of mosaic. The Romanesque churches are really beautiful, with their pillars of porphyry, antique capitals, images standing out upon a glitter of gold, Byzantine mosaics, slender columns, and carved trefoils. The church of Santa Maria della Salute has been made famous by the picture of her by Canaletto in the Louvre. One of the most beautiful things within is a ceiling by Titian. Venetian arabesque ornament of the Quattri cento is tenderly sculptured, and the friezes are undercut in a reverent and delicate manner.

One of the most beautiful palaces of the Grand Canal is the Palazzo Corner-Spinelli. It is especially noticeable because of the number of windows in the basement,—there is no observable order in the placing of them. Then, again, there

SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE

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are contrasts in the shape of balconies. Some are small and curved inwards; others are long and straight. In 1481 the palaces became of a more advanced character. The central windows were grouped together; but this last feature is characteristic of Venetian architecture of all periods. One of Sammichele's finest works is the Palazzo Grimani, on the Grand Canal. It was carried out by others after Sammichele's death; nevertheless, it is very fine. It has great dignity and majesty, and is a composition such as will be found in Venice alone.

Venice is, architecturally, the most interesting city in Italy. It contains works of all periods, from the early Christian foundation to the eighteenth century; and perhaps the best examples of each are there. First there was the school of the Lombardi; next, that of Sammichele and Sansovino, quite distinct, an influence direct from Rome. Then came, closely following, the schools of Palladio and Scamozzi; and a fourth is that of the seventeenth-century artists, who did good work in Venice, but on different lines. The best example of this late period in Venice is Santa Maria della Salute, erected in token of the cessation of the plague. It is situated at the sea gate to the presence-chamber of the Queen of the Adriatic.

Few churches of any age can rival it architecturally. The composition is mainly pyramidal.

The barocco style is nowhere so appalling as in Venice. It is most untruthful and unprincipled in character. There is a great deal of ostentation and bombastic pomp about it. A terrible example of this can be seen in Doge Valiero's tomb, where the marble is made to imitate silk and cloth wherever possible.

The Palazzo Pesaro was built, rich and gross, typical of the domestic Renaissance, when architecture tended to decay. Technically it is a most inferior building. The figures in the sculpture are spasmodic in action, and restless; there is a projecting, diamond-like rustication, far too bold in treatment. The angles are an exaggeration of the style of Sansovino.

There are three great causes of the decadence of Venetian architecture. First of all, it was started by purists who were bound too firmly to ancient usages, too much regulated by precedent, coldness, and formality. Secondly, a more disastrous influence was brought to bear—that of Michael Angelo, the example of freedom to the verge of licence. This revolution was brought about partly by the revolt of the public feeling against the

PALAZZO MENGALDO

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restrictions of the purists, partly by real want of knowledge and failure to understand traditional weaknesses and systems of design with regard to construction. The purpose and use of features was misunderstood; uncontrolled freedom was allowed; ornament was added for its own sake, instead of being bound up in architectural lines. By such freaks and caprices almost every building at this time, though not ignoble in composition, was completely disfigured. Thirdly, the architects made the fatal mistake of using the excrescences of a weakness of the great masters and endeavouring to raise them to the dignity of features of design. Thus Venetian architecture withered and decayed, fading out into a pale shadow of what it had once been. That glorious art, which had once been so superb in the hands of the masters, sank into the execution of feigned architecture, false perspective, and fictitious grand façades, with bad statues in unreal relief.

OSPEDALE CIVILE

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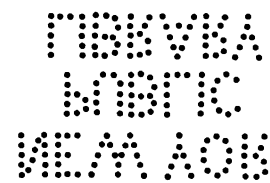
ST. MARK'S

ST. MARK'S



ST. MARK'S

WHEN you arrive before the Church of St. Mark's you realise that at last, after all your travels throughout the length and breadth of the globe, you have before you a building in which colour and design unite in forming perfection. Here stands without a shadow of doubt the finest building in the world, flawless. It is impossible to imagine that St. Mark's has been built stone by stone, that the brains of mere men have designed it, and that the hands of mere men have set it up. It must, you think, have been there from all time just as it is,—formed as the bubble is formed, and the opal. It is a revelation to look upon such perfect symmetry, such glorious colouring. Like an opal, St. Mark's shows no sign of age. It glitters like a new jewel, and might have been built but yesterday. Unlike most churches, it has no sombre, frowning air. Its spires do not

launch themselves into the sky. It does not bristle with towers and arched buttresses. Rather the building seems to stoop and crouch. It is surmounted by domes, as is a Mohammedan mosque, and is a strange mixture of Oriental ornamentation and Christian symbolism. Horses take the place of angels; grace and splendour, the place of austerity and mystery. Who ever heard of gold, alabaster, amber, ivory, enamel, and mosaic being used in the construction of a Christian church? Who ever heard of dolphins, tridents, marine shells, trefoils, cupolas, marble plaques, backgrounds of vividly coloured mosaics and of gold? It is more like a fairy palace, or an Alcazar, or a mosque, than a Catholic church; more like an altar to Neptune than one to the Christian God.

The ultimate result of this apparent incoherence is a harmonious whole. Reverence and Christianity are here — an absolute and living faith. Even the most devout Catholic has no cause for complaint. With all its pagan art, St. Mark's preserves the character of primitive Christianity. The exterior is extremely complicated. There are many porticoes, each with columns of marble, jasper, and other precious materials; many mosaics on grounds of gold over each doorway; many

PALAZZO DANIELI

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historic stories and legends that these mosaics represent; many fantastic forms of angelic beasts, saints, Byzantine and Middle-Ages bas-reliefs, magnificent bronze doors, arcades, lamps, peacocks —so many that it is impossible to attempt to describe them in detail. Even to tell of the delicate structure and the subtle, ever-changing, iridescent colour is beyond me. It is almost bewildering when one thinks that at the time St. Mark's was built every house in every side street had much of the same extravagant richness, beauty of colouring, and superb architecture. As Mr. Ruskin says, it is absurd to imagine that churches were designed in a style particularly different from that of other buildings. There is nothing specially sacred in what we call ecclesiastical architecture. All the houses were built much in the same way. Only, while the houses have fallen into decay, the church has been preserved by a devoted populace. It is not often that one sees a coloured building, a building teeming with colour; but St. Mark's vibrates with colour. There are no blank spaces of grey stone. Every square inch is beautiful.

When one enters from the bright sun, St. Mark's appears dim and dark; but you must not judge by that. To appreciate its beauties, the

student should visit the church day after day. Gradually they will unfold themselves. That is what constitutes one of the charms of St. Mark's. It is as though one were in a carved-out cave of gold and purple, on a voyage of discovery all by oneself. At first you can see nothing; but as your eyes become accustomed to the darkness, colours begin to grow upon you out of the gloom. Some minutes must elapse before you realise that the floor, which at first you took to be of a deep-toned grey stone, is a mosaic composed of thousands of differently coloured marbles—that you are walking on precious marbles of peacock hues. Golden gleams above your head attract you to the domed ceiling, and, to your delight and amazement, you discover that it is formed entirely of gold mosaic. You are passing a dim recess, and you see a blurred mass of rich colour; after a time you realise that you are looking at a famous masterpiece by one of the great Italian painters. You sit there as in a dream; and one by one the pictures and the mosaics, the Gothic images, the cupolas, the arches, the marbles, the alabaster, the porphyry, and the jasper appear to you—until what was darkness and gloom appears to be teeming and vibrating with colour.

FRANCESCA

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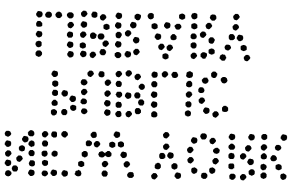
St. Mark's carries one away from the everyday world. On the ignorant and the uninitiated it has a marvellous effect. Men and women and children flock to it by the thousands daily. Many and fervent are the worshippers one sees praying before some special saint or beloved Madonna. Some are weeping, and others kneel for hours on the cold stones. The unhappy people of Venice have many sins and sorrows, and there is much that is comforting to them in this rich, majestic church. The fainting spirit is revived and the most desperate person stimulated as he looks about him at the sparkling mosaic roof, the rich walls, and the dimly burning lamps. There is much in precious stones, music, sculptured figures, in pictures of heaven and hell, that appeals to these people. An infinite and pitiful God somewhere about them, these peasants of poor imaginations cannot understand. They want a faith that they can cling to —almost something that they can finger and touch. St. Mark's is to the poor of Venice like a beautifully illustrated Bible. There, in the cupolas, the story of the Old Testament is presented in mosaic, plainly for every eye to see, for the youngest and least educated to understand. It touches them, and appeals to them, and keeps their faith burning

bright and clear. There they have the seven days of creation represented,—mysterious, weird, and primitive,—discs of gold and silver representing the sun and the moon. There are the Tree of Knowledge, the Temptation, the Fall, and the Expulsion from Paradise. Then comes the slaying of Abel by Cain, Adam and Eve tilling the ground. There is a strange mosaic of the Ark, with the animals going in two by two on a background of gold; there are the stories of Abraham, of Joseph, and of Moses, all quaintly executed, full of detail and without regard to anatomy. There is no struggle to imitate Nature, and the colouring is good.

In the time when St. Mark's was built there were no cheap Bibles, and, if there had been any, the poorer classes could not have read them. Thus the great Church was an endless boon to them, one which could never be quite exhausted. Many and splendid are the lessons these mosaics and pictures taught and continue to teach. The mysteries and beauties of the Bible are impressed upon the mind in a manner that cannot be effaced. All the virtues are there—Temperance quenching fire with water; Charity, mother of the virtues, and the last attained in human life; Patience; Modesty;

THE DOGANA



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Chastity; Prudence; Lowliness of Thought, Kindness, and Compassion; and Love which is Stronger than Death. These lessons the Venetians have continually before them, to help them to bear the troubles of this world, and giving them hope for the peace of another. Most of the pictures in mosaic are typically Byzantine, mainly symbolical and of the first school of design in Venice. Upon these pictures the people of Venice live and thrive spiritually: the pleasure is real and pure. Colour has a great influence upon the emotions, just as music has; and colour was used in the earliest times to stimulate devotion and repentance. There are pictures in which the most profound emotion is expressed. When one sees the pictures of Christ's life and passion, one cannot but be touched.

By the medium of paintings in the churches, people began to understand and appreciate art, and to feel the need of it in their homes. Not only is St. Mark's an education to the poor and the ignorant: it is also an education to the student and to the artist. Here you have pictures of the nation of fishermen at their greatest period; also you find legends splendidly told, such as the story of the two merchants who brought the bones of

St. Mark from Alexandria under cover of pork, crying "Swine! swine!" You see the priests, the Doge, and the people of Venice as they were in the days of her power.

In one of the dim corners of St. Mark's is a statue of an old man on crutches with a finger on his lip. This is a Byzantine architect who was sent to Pietro Orseolo from Constantinople, as the cleverest Eastern builder of his time, to construct St. Mark's Church. He was a bow-legged dwarf, and undertook to build this marvellous edifice, unequalled in its beauty, on condition that a statue of himself should be placed in a conspicuous position in the Church. This was arranged. One day the Doge overheard the architect say that he could not execute the work in the way he had intended. "Then," said Orseolo, "I am absolved from my promise"; and he merely erected a small statue of the architect in a corner of the Church.

Think of the makers of St. Mark's—the great men who worked together with brains and hands to make her what she is! The army of artists, painting, designing, sculpturing, one after the other from generation to generation in this great cathedral! Titian, Tintoretto, Palma, Pilotto, Salviati, and Sebastian were among the painters whose designs

ST. MARK'S PIAZZA

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were used for the mosaics; Bozza, Vincenzo, Bianchini, and Passerini, among the master mosaicists; Pietro Lombardo, Alberghetti, and Massegna, among the sculptors. Then, the other thousands, all men of extraordinary talent, of whom astonishingly little is known, fervent workers! Throughout eight centuries they worked, and with what care and skill and patience! At what a cost, too, these masterpieces must have been achieved! Think of the temples and the quarries that have been robbed of their gold, and of the marbles, the alabaster, and the porphyry. All the saints and prophets and martyrs are there; the stories of the Virgin, of the Passion, and of Calvary; all the scenes from the Old and New Testaments.

The early Venetians seem to have revelled in colour and in rich materials. The builders laid on the richest colour and the most brilliant jewels they could find. They were exiles from ancient and beautiful cities, and when they succeeded in war their first thought was to bring home shiploads of precious materials. Just as the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Arabs had an intense love of colour, so had the early Venetians, who used precious stones in great abundance, even in their own

private houses. A most extraordinary thing is that there is nothing vulgar about the costliness of St. Mark's. Although both inside and out it is rich beyond words, rich in precious stones, rich in every way, the building is full of reserve. There is no ostentation, no vulgarity. The jewels used in its construction do not for one moment interfere with one's sense of the beautiful, or with reverence and religion. They simply give a rare luxurious feeling to the place, and in the ignorant inspire respect for a Church thus encased and honoured with the richest in the land.

Then, again, the jewels do not form a principal part of the ornamentation. One looks first at the exquisite workmanship; and afterwards are noticed the precious materials, which form a subordinate part and do not interfere with the design. It is almost as though a veil had been swept over the whole building, both inside and out, bringing together this wealth of colour and forming it into a complete whole. It has the effect of a marvellous glaze—of a picture that has had a thin glaze swept over it. Wherever you look, the Church teems with colour; but it seems to be piercing through a veil. It is not vivid positive colour, but colour breaking through a skin. In the East I

SCUOLA DI SAN MARCO

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have seen millions of pounds' worth of jewels in one heap, with the sun shining on them, and I was overpowered with this wealth, I was inspired with their costliness;—but St. Mark's does not affect you at all in this way. Rich man and peasant are alike in this respect: they are elevated and stimulated in that building, not because of its costliness, but because of its extreme beauty. The technique is marvellous, but not obvious: the moment you are conscious of technique you may be sure that the work is poor. You never wonder how St. Mark's was built; and that is the highest tribute to the marvellous arts which it expresses.

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PAINTERS OF THE RENAISSANCE

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PAINTERS OF THE RENAISSANCE

One of the chief characteristics of the Venetian school of painters, and one of the most attractive to all art lovers, is their great appreciation of colour. In most of their work colour seems to be the chief motive. Pictures by Venetian painters never suggest drawings. They strike you not as having been coloured afterwards, but as having been painted essentially for the colour. One sees this throughout the whole school. And in their paintings they do not go to extremes. There is no exaggeration in their colouring. They do not err, as do so many schools, either on the foxy-red side or on the cold steely colouring. Unfortunately, much of the beautiful colouring of these pictures is lost by age. One has to become accustomed to that ugly brown skin which has formed upon the surface before one can realise

what great colourists these early Venetians really were. The pictures somehow cause one to resent oil as a medium. One realises how different they must have looked when fresh from the easel, and wishes that these great masters could have painted with a medium more lasting—as did the Chinese, whose works are as young and fresh now as if they had been painted yesterday: the years have left no trace whatever: the simple colouring is the same to-day as it was a hundred years ago. Many of the earlier paintings, those of the Gothic Venetians, the less-known men, are a good deal better preserved. Their canvasses have not turned black; the glazings have not departed; and there is no smoky film upon them, as in the case of the works of the great masters, such as Titian, Tintoretto, and Giovanni Bellini, men who came a hundred years afterwards. It may very possibly be that the pigment which painters used then was purer and less adulterated. Certainly one sees in the various schools all over the world that the older the pictures are the better preserved they are. Age never improves a picture — unless, indeed, it is an extremely bad one, when time serves as a thin veil.

Undoubtedly these great colourists, the Venetians,

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influenced the various schools of painters all over the world, and are still influencing them. Originally they worked for the churches, and colour was used exactly as music was used—to appeal to the senses, to the emotions: to influence the people, to teach them biblical stories and parables. It also educated the people to understand painting and to feel the need of it in their daily lives.

At about this time the Renaissance began to express itself, not only in poetry and other literature, but also in paintings; and it found clearer utterance in Venice than elsewhere. The conditions at this time were perfect for the development of art. Venice at that period lent herself to art. She was at peace with the whole world, and she was prosperous. The people were joyous, gay, and light-hearted. They longed for everything that made life pleasant. Naturally, they wanted colour. And Venice was not affected by that wave of science which swept over the rest of Italy. The Venetians were not at all absorbed in literature and archæology. They wanted merely to be joyous. This was an ideal atmosphere for the painter. Such a condition of things could not but create a fine artistic period. The painter is not concerned with science and

learning, or should not be. Such a condition of mind would result in feeble, academical work—in struggling to tell a story with his medium, instead of producing a beautiful design. That is partly why the Venetian school has had such a strong influence on art, even until the present day. The conditions were perfect for the development of art, because the patrons were capable of appreciating beautiful form and beautiful colour. Because the public would have it, this new school of painters appeared. The demand was created, and the supply came.

There was undoubtedly great friction among the painters of this period, exactly as there has been lately with the modern impressionists and the academic painters. Some of the old Venetians resented the new school that was springing up; but they had eventually to bend and try to paint in sympathy with the senses and emotion of their patrons. You find this new mode of thought expressed strongly even in the churches and in the treatment of religious subjects. The old ideals were altered. Men no longer painted saints and Madonnas as mild, attenuated people. The figures were lifelike and full of actuality. The women were Venetian women of the period

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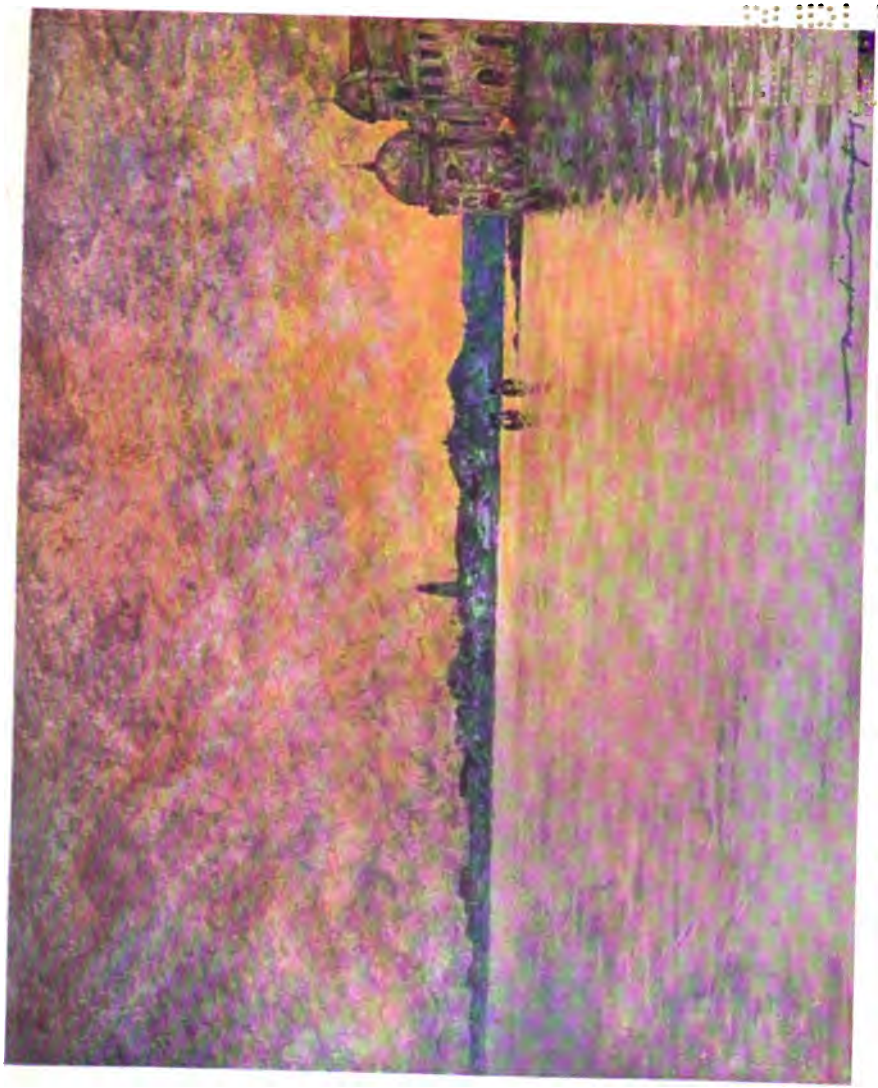

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dressed in splendid robes and dignified; the men were healthy, full-blooded, and joyous. Florence, however, at this particular period was undergoing quite a different mood. The Florentines preferred to express themselves in poetry and in prose. That was the language the masses understood. Painting was not popular. There has always been a literary atmosphere about Florence, and one feels it there to this day; it is essentially the city for the student.

When painting became so much a vogue in Venice, painters began to try and perfect the art in every possible way. They struggled for actuality. Art began to develop in the direction of realism. The Venetians wanted form and colour in their pictures; but they wanted also a suggestion of distance and atmosphere. In those early pictures you find that painters smeared their distance to give it a blurred look. That was the beginning of perspective. Painters of this period seem to have been marvellously modern. They were quite in the movement. There has never been any attempt at harking back to earlier periods.

Venice was very wealthy at this time, and Venetian people never missed an opportunity of parading wealth. They loved glory where the

State was concerned, and encouraged pageantry by both land and sea. They loved to see Doge and senators in their gorgeous robes, either on the piazza or on the Grand Canal. Then there came a demand for painted records of these processions and ceremonials. All this was encouraged by the State for political reasons. Pageantry entertained the people, and at the same time made them less inquisitive. Much better, these great officials argued, that the people should be enjoying things in this way than that they should begin to inquire into the doings of the State. Gentile Bellini and Carpaccio were the first pageant painters of the period. Paolo Veronese, who came much later, also loved pageantry, elevated it to the height of serious art, and idealised prosaic magnificence. He painted great banquets, and combined ceremony, splendour, and worldliness with childlike naturalness and simplicity.

First of all, as has been shown, it was the Church that called for pictures—to represent their saints and to enforce biblical legends. Painting became more and more popular. People became more and more educated to understand painting, until at last they wanted their domestic and social lives depicted. Also they wanted to hang these pictures

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in their homes. Pictures were neither so rare nor so expensive in those days as they are now, and people could afford to buy them—even the lower and the middle classes. Immediately there sprang up painters who satisfied the demand. In those days there were no academies and no salons wherein artists fought to outdo one another as to the size and eccentricity of their pictures; there were no vulgar struggles of that kind. Painters simply supplied to the best of their ability the wants of the people. Naturally, the public required small pictures, suitable to the size of their houses. Therefore, they needed gay and beautiful colour, and pictures in which the subjects did not obtrude themselves forcibly. Thus, in the natural course of events pageantry found less favour, and pictures of social and domestic life found more. Religious subjects were rather deserted. By the aid of books people could learn all the stories of the Bible. Besides, they were not at that period in a devotional or contrite mood. They were too happy and full of life to feel any pressing need for religion.

Painting took much the same position with the Venetians as music has with us now. The fashion for triumphal marches and the clashing of cymbals in processional pictures had died out, and the vogue

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of symphonies and sonatas had come in. No one at that time seemed quite capable of satisfying the public taste. Carpaccio, whose subtle yet brilliant colouring would have exactly suited it, never undertook these subjects. Giovanni Bellini attempted them; but his style was too severe for the gaiety of the period.

However, there was not long to wait. Soon appeared a man who told the public what they wanted and gave it to them. He swept away conventions and revolutionised art all over the world. He was a genius—Giorgione. Pupil of Bellini and Carpaccio, he combined the qualities of both. When he was quite a youth painters all over the world followed his methods. Curiously enough, there are not a dozen of this great master's works preserved at the present day. The bulk of them were frescoes which long ago disappeared. The few that remain are quite enough to make one realise what a great master he was. The picture which most appeals to me is an altar-piece of the Virgin and Child at Castelfranco. It is painted in the pure Giorgione spirit. St. George in armour is at one side, resting on a spear which seems to be coming right out of the picture; while on the other side there is a monk, and in the

SAN GIORGIO MAGGIORE

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background are a banner of rich brocade and a small landscape.

The Renaissance, the rejuvenation of art, seems to have slowly developed until at length it culminated in Giorgione. He was the man who opened the door, the one great modern genius of his period, whose influence remains and is felt to this day. Velasquez would never have been known but for Giorgione. Imagine this young man with his new ideas and his sweeps of golden colouring suddenly appearing in a studio full of men, all painting in the correct severe style established at the period. Such a man must needs influence all his fellows. Even Giovanni Bellini, the Watts of his day, acknowledged the young man's genius, and almost unconsciously began to mingle Giorgione's style with his own. We cannot realise what they meant at that period—these new ideas of Giorgione. He created just as much of a "furore" as when Benvenuto Cellini, in his sculpture, allowed a limb to hang over the edge of a pedestal. He needed this to complete his design. Since then almost everyone that has modelled has hung a limb over a pedestal. But Benvenuto Cellini started this new era. So, in much the same sort of way, did Giorgione. He cut away from convention, and

introduced landscape as backgrounds to his figure subjects. He was the first to get actuality and movement in the arrangement of drapery. The Venetian public had long been waiting, though unconsciously, for this work; and Giorgione was so well in touch with the needs of the people that the moment he gave them what they wanted they would take nothing else.

In the work of Giorgione the Renaissance finds its most genuine expression. It is the Renaissance at its height. Both Giorgione and Titian were village boys brought to Venice by their parents and placed under the care of Giovanni Bellini to learn art. They must have been of very much the same age. It is interesting to watch the career of these boys—the two different natures—the impulsiveness of the one and the plodding perseverance of the other. Giorgione shot like a meteor early and bright into the world of art, scattering the clouds in the firmament, bold, crowding the work and the pleasure of a lifetime in a few short years. His work was a delight to him, and life itself was full of everything that was beautiful. He was surrounded always by a multitude of admiring comrades, imitating him and urging him on. Giorgione was ever restless and impetuous by nature. When

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commissions flagged and he had no particular work in hand, he took to painting the outside of his own house. He cared not a whit for convention. He followed his own tastes and his own feelings. He converted his home into a glow of crimson and gold,—great forms starting up along the walls, sweet cherub boys, fables of Greece and Rome,—a dazzling confusion of brilliant tints and images. Think how this palace must have appeared reflected in the waters of the Canal! Unfortunately, the sun and the wind fought with this masterly canvas, conquered, and bore all these beautiful things away. Indeed, many of Giorgione's works were frescoes, and the sea air swept away much of the glory of his life. His career was brief but gay, full of work and full of colour. This impetuous painter died in the very heyday of his success. Some say he died of grief at being deserted by a lady whom he loved; others that he caught the plague.

Of what a different nature was Titian! He studied in the same bottega as Giorgione, and was brought up under much the same conditions. But he was a patient worker, absorbing the knowledge of everyone about him, ever learning and experimenting; never completing. He did not think of striking off on a new line, of executing bold and

original work. He wanted to master not one side of painting but all sides. He waited until his knowledge should be complete before he declared himself, before he really accomplished anything. He absorbed the new principles of his comrade Giorgione, as he absorbed everything else that was good, with unerring instinct and steady power. Titian was never led away in any one direction. He was always open to any new suggestion. As it happened, it was just as well that Titian worked thus at his leisure, and Giorgione with haste and fever. Titian had ninety-nine years to live; Giorgione had but thirty-four. There is an interesting anecdote told by Vasari with regard to these two young men. They were both at work on the painting of a large building, the Fondaco dei Tedeschi; Titian painting the wall facing the street, and Giorgione the side towards the canal. Several gentlemen, not knowing which was the particular work of either artist, went one day to inspect the building, and declared that the wall facing the Merceria far excelled in beauty that of the river front. Giorgione was so indignant at this slight that he declared that he would neither see nor speak to Titian again.

Titian does not seem to have been very much

AT THE MOUTH OF THE GRAND CANAL

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appreciated by his patrons at the beginning of his career. He inspired no affection. He was acknowledged as the greatest of all the young painters; but the Republic, it would seem, was never very proud of the man who did her so much credit and added so greatly to her fame. Even although the noise of his genius was echoed all over the world,—although the great Emperor himself stooped to pick up his brush, declaring that a Titian might well be served by a Cæsar,—although Charles the Fifth sat to him repeatedly, and maintained that he was the only painter whom he would care to honour,—the Venetians do not seem to have been greatly enamoured of him. Perhaps it was that they missed the soul, the purity and grace and devotion, of the pictures of Bellini and Carpaccio. Certainly, as far as one can judge, he did not have a prepossessing nature. He was shifty in his dealings with his patrons and unfaithful in his promises. He seems to have belonged to a corrupt and luxurious society. Pietro Aretino had a very bad influence on Titian. He taught him to intrigue, to flatter, to betray. Aretino was a base-born adventurer for whom no historian seems to have a good word. He was, however, a man of wit and dazzling cleverness,

with a touch of real genius. Aretino corresponded with all the most cultured men of his time, and he had the power of making those whom he chose famous. It was he who introduced Titian to Charles the Fifth.

Titian's pictures were much more saleable in foreign courts than in his own country. Abroad they did not seem to have the lack of soul which the Venetians so greatly deplored. It was the old case of the prophet having no honour in his own country. Certainly in the art of portraiture Titian has never been surpassed. At that period he had the field completely to himself. Nothing could have been more magnificent than Titian's portraits. They help to record the history of the age. It was in Titian's power to confer upon his subjects the splendour that they loved, handing them down to posterity as heroes and learned persons. His men were all noble, worthy to be senators and emperors, no coxcombs or foolish gallants. Titian was more at home in pictures of this kind than in religious subjects. His Madonnas are without significance; his Holy Families give no message of blessing to the world.

In the prime of his life he moved from his workshops to a noble and luxurious palace in San

THE FOUNTAIN

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Cassiano, facing the wide lagoon and the islands. All trace of it has disappeared, and homes of the poor cover the garden where the best company of Venice was once entertained. It is said that Titian gave the gayest parties and suppers—that he entertained the most regal guests. Nevertheless, although made a knight and a count, and a favourite at most of the courts in Europe, he was greatly disliked by the Venetian Signoria, who in the midst of his famous supper-parties called upon him to demand that he should execute a certain work for which he had received the money long before. He seems to have been exceedingly grasping—a strange trait in the character of a painter. One sees throughout his correspondence, until the end of his life, a certain desire and demand for money. Undoubtedly he often painted merely for money alone, turning out a sacred picture one day and a Venus the next with equal impartiality Anything, it was said, could have been got out of Titian for money. The Venetians never loved Titian's works, though foreign princes adored them. He seems to have laboured, until the end of his life, more from love of gain than from necessity. He was buried at the Frari, carried thither in great haste by order of the Signoria,—for it was at the

time of the plague, when other victims were taken to the outlying islands and put in the earth unnamed.

Somehow, in reading the life of Titian one is brought right away to the twentieth century. Here is the painter with the attendant journalist, Pietro Aretino, the boomer. Aretino was a journalist, the first. He took Titian in hand and "ran" him for all he was worth. Had it not been for this system of booming, Titian would probably not have been well known during his lifetime. In the Academy of the Fine Arts one can trace by his pictures a splendid historical record of Titian's life, and can see plainly the changes in popular feeling and their effect upon his work. For very many years he lived and painted constantly, and then was killed by the plague!

There is a picture painted by him when he was fourteen years of age—a picture which contains all the qualities, in the germ, of his later work: marvellous architecture, pomp, yet great simplicity and luminous colour. Here also is the last picture he ever painted—at the age of ninety-nine. Think of the interval between the two! It is sombre, pious. There is something pathetic about it. This great painter, whose work showed such fury, audacity,

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vehemence,—the man who had always the sun on his palette—was now painting mildly, carefully, obviously with the shadow of approaching death upon him.

A marvellous picture by Titian hangs in the Academy of the Fine Arts. It is considered to be one of his finest pictures—the masterpiece of all his masterpieces—the eye of the peacock, as it were. This picture was neglected for many years, hidden away in a corner of a little old church, and covered with a thick layer of cobwebs and dust. The custodian had almost forgotten the subject of the picture and the name of the painter. One day a certain Count Cicogna happened to visit the church. Being a great connoisseur and lover of art, he noticed this picture, and could not resist moistening his finger and rubbing it over a portion of the canvas. To his amazement, this portion emerged young and fresh, and as highly coloured as when it left the painter's hands—a picture bearing upon it the unmistakable stamp of Titian's genius! The delight of the Count can be imagined. He suggested to the custodian, with great care and tact, that he would present to the church a bran-new glossy picture, very large, of some religious subject; and mentioned in a casual way that they

might give him the dilapidated old picture as a slight return. This was the Assunta. It was painted for the church of the Frari. Fra Marco Jerman, the head of the convent, ordered it at his own expense. Many a time when the work was in progress he and all the ignorant brethren visited the painter's studio and criticised his picture, grumbling and shaking their heads, and wondering whether it would be good enough to be accepted, whether it would be sneered at when uncovered before all Venice. They undoubtedly thought that they had done a rash thing in engaging him. Think of the agony of Titian, hindered by these ignorant men, being forced to explain elaborately that the figures were not too large, that they must needs be in proportion to the space! It was not until the envoy of the Emperor had seen the picture and declared it to be a masterpiece, offering a large sum of money for its purchase, that the Frari understood its value, and decided that, as the buying and selling of pictures was not in their profession, they had better keep it.

Tintoretto painted, according to the popular feeling of his period, for the good of mankind. This we certainly owe to the Renaissance—the desire to benefit mankind, and not only men

BRIDGE NEAR THE PALAZZO LABIA

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individually. Tintoretto felt this strongly. One sees not only the effect of this new era of thought in his work: one sees also human life at the base of it. Tintoretto worked for the good of mankind, and his work throbs with humanity. There was atmosphere, reality, in it. He was, it is true, a pupil of Titian; but it was Michael Angelo whose works had the greatest attraction for him. He loved Angelo's overwhelming power and gigantic force. Tintoretto's pictures seem to possess much of the glowing colour of Titian; but he paid greater attention to chiaroscuro. He seems to have had the power of lowering the tone of a sky to suit his composition of light and shade. His conception of the human form was colossal. His work showed a wide sweep and power. He turned to religion, not because it was a duty, but because it answered the needs of the human heart—because it helped him to forget the mean and sordid side of life, braced him to his work, and consoled him in his days of despair. The Bible was not to him a cut-and-dried document concerning the Christian religion, but a series of beautiful parables pointing to a finer life. Then, Tintoretto asked himself, Why keep to the old forms and the old ideals? Why should the saints and biblical people be

represented as Romans, walking in a Roman background? He himself thought of them as people of his own kind, and painted them as such. Thus, he argued, people became more familiar with the Bible, more readily understood it.

Tintoretto painted portraits not only of Venetians, but also of foreign princes. Although he painted with tremendous rapidity, the demand was greater than the supply. His paintings were popular. They gave pleasure to the eye, and stimulated the emotions. He painted people at their best, in glowing health and full of life. Under his marvellous brush old men became vigorous and full-blooded. His pictures give the same sort of pleasure as one finds in looking upon a casket of jewels—they are just as deathless in their brilliancy. The portrait that the popular taste called forth in Titian's day was just about as unlike the typical modern portrait as you could possibly imagine,—the colourless, cold, unsympathetic portrait of the fish-eyed mayor in his robes.

At the age of fifteen, Jacopo Robusti—tintoretto, the little dyer—was brought by his father, Battista Robusti, to the studio of the great painter Titian. There he stayed for a little while, until one day Titian came across, in his bottega, some

THE HOUSE WITH THE BLUE DOOR

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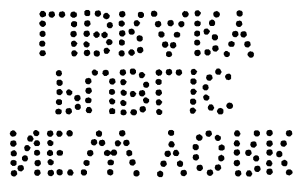

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drawings that showed promise. On discovering that they were from the hand of Jacopo, he sent the boy away. Young as he was, Tintoretto had all the arrogance of the well-to-do citizen. He would brook no man's No, and would not yield his own pretensions for the greatest genius in Christendom. He did not need money: he was independent: and he started boldly to teach himself. Boiling with rage at the affront Titian had put upon him, he was determined to make a career for himself. He studied the works of Michael Angelo and of Titian, and inscribed upon his studio wall, so that his ambition might always be before his eyes, "Il desegno di Michael Angelo, e' il colorito di Titiano." He studied casts of ancient marbles, and made designs of them by the light of a lamp, in order to gain a strong effect of shadow. Also, he copied the pictures of Titian. Seeking, by every means in his power, to educate himself, he modelled figures of wax and plaster, upon which he hung his drapery. And always, whether painting by night or by day, he arranged his lights so as to have everything in high relief. Tintoretto's inventions for teaching himself were endless. Often he visited the painters' benches in the piazza of St. Mark's, where the poor men of the profession

worked at painting chests and furniture of all kinds. In those days there were too many painters. The profession was overdone. Many young men who had real genius worked at the benches. Titian was the great man at the moment, and Palma Vecchio. But Tintoretto did not care. He forced his work down men's throats—gave it to them for nothing if they would not pay for it. He was always ready with his brush, and would paint anything from an organ to an altar-piece. He worked like a giant, with tremendous sweep and power; no subject was too great or too laborious; and always he had a desire to do his best.

Tintoretto would not be trifled with or condescended to. He would not have his work undervalued, and would allow no patrician, not even a prince, to play the patron to him. He was determined not to be set aside. He flung his pictures at people's heads, and insisted on undertaking any great piece of work there was to do. Thus, Tintoretto's pictures are to be seen everywhere in Venice—in almost every church, every council-hall, every humble chapel, every parish church, every sacristy. He neglected no opportunity to make his work known. He worked with extraordinary rapidity. Whenever Tintoretto came across a

CANAL IN GIUDECCA ISLAND

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fine fair wall he prevailed upon the master-mason to allow him to paint it. A fifty-foot space he would cover with avidity, asking nothing for his work but the cost of the material, giving his time and labour as a gift.

Portraiture was the outcome of realism, and one of the most important discoveries of the Renaissance. People began to feel that they wanted not only their affluence in possessions, but also their own individual faces and features, handed down to posterity. Thus portraiture began to creep in. At first it appeared in the churches under cover of saints and Madonnas; gradually it became possible to distinguish one from another—it was not always the same face. Painters took models from life as their saints. But portraiture in painting was very slow in reaching perfection. Sculpture had accomplished that long before; now that the latest craze was for portraiture, it was the sculptors who were the most prepared to take it up, and stepped forward to execute commissions. They had plenty of material in the way of old Roman coins and busts. Donatello and Vittore Pisano were the two men who first offered to satisfy the new want. Donatello executed marvellous studies of character, and Pisano medals such as have never been seen

before or since. But even these men, fine as their work undoubtedly was, felt that the public could not long remain satisfied merely with the sculptured portrait. They must have colour. Donatello, therefore, began to stain and colour his busts, showing that painting, not sculpture, was to be the portrait art of the Renaissance. Vittore Pisano also gave up his sculpture, and turned his attention to portrait-painting; but he was only an amateur in this direction, and did not meet with much success. No portrait-painter of any merit was produced in that generation. The idea was entirely new. Men had not had sufficient time in which to study the human face. The next generation ushered in Mantegna, who painted a marvellous portrait of Cardinal Sciramo; but he went too far in the other direction. He painted his man as he was—as he saw him, line for line. He painted the soul and heart of him—and the soul and the heart were black. Venice was revolted with such a portrait. It seemed indeed indecent that a man's character should be laid bare in such a way. It was a picture they did not care to hang in the Council Chamber, a picture that was unpleasant to live with. The Cardinal belonged to the State. His honour was their honour, and it must not be

defiled. The Venetians came to the conclusion that portraits must be painted not in full-face but in profile. Thus the characteristics of a man, if they be not pleasant, do not come out clearly. This accounts for the number of profile portraits. The age wanted an agreeable portrait. This Giorgione provided. He realised that the treatment must always be bright, joyous, romantic. His followers trod in his footsteps: the master's style was too strong and pronounced to be much deviated from. Giorgione seems to have reached the topmost height of art at that period. Even Titian, for a generation after his death, followed in Giorgione's lines; only, Titian's work was a little more sober, a little less sunny. He had the sense to see that Giorgione had expanded the old rule and done something worth adopting, and for a time he simply followed this joyful outburst. His early years fell at a time when life was glowing, radiant, almost intoxicating in its vigour. But youth and joy cannot last; nor could the Renaissance spirit. Gradually the trouble and the strife from which the whole of Italy was suffering filtered into Venice, and cast a serious aspect over art and social life. Venice, of all the states in Italy, was the last to feel this sobering influence.

She had been defeated both in battle and in commerce; and, although she was not totally crushed under the heel of Spain, life was not the endless holiday it promised to be. Men took themselves more seriously, and the quieter pleasures of friendship and affection began to be more sought after. Religion revived in importance. Men clung to it, as they always do in time of trouble, for comfort and support. It was no longer a political sentiment, but a personal one. Art declined as the sunshine and the gaiety that had fed and nourished it ebbed away. When men began to feel that individually they were of no avail, that they were subject to the powers round about and above them, the death-blow of great art fell. Titian was influenced by his environment, and his painting changed completely. He produced pictures that would have been looked upon with scorn in his earlier days. The faces of his men are no longer smooth and free from care. One saw there struggle and suffering, and all that life had done for them. But Titian was not a pessimist at heart. The joy and gaiety in which he had been brought up formed part of his character. Whatever changes may have happened to his country politically, nothing could alter that entirely. And

THE ORANGE SAIL

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it was no doubt this early training and the atmosphere in which he was brought up that made his pictures the masterpieces they were. You notice the men who came after Titian—how they began to decline. For example, Lorenzo Lotto had been brought up in the heyday of the Renaissance; but the new order of things, the change from national virility to national decadence, enfeebled him. Then, again, the coming in touch with poets and men of letters, victims flying from the fury of Spain, was a new stimulant to art. It did not exactly improve it; but it certainly changed it.

A fine period of painting does not come in a day, nor does it end in a day; and, although the universal interest in the Venetian school dies with Titian and Tintoretto, it does not die unnoticed. The torch of art flickered up many times in Venice before it was finally extinguished. The men who came immediately after Tintoretto had not the strength to start off on any new lines. They simply fell back on variations of the earlier masters, showing much of the masters' weaknesses, but few of their great qualities. Some even were so inartistic as to attempt to pass off their pictures, on ignorant people, as Titians and Giorgiones. How-

ever, before the Republic disappeared there were two or three men who took the first rank among the painters of the period, provincial artists, men whose art was sufficiently like her own to be readily understood, such as Paul Veronese. The provinces were not declining so rapidly as Venice was. They were less troubled by the approaching storm. Men there led simple, healthy lives; Spanish manners were long in reaching the provinces, and, when they did, the people were slow to succumb. Men in the provinces had stamina, simplicity, and courage with which to meet the new order of things. They combined ceremony and splendour with childlike naturalness. Consequently, the works of Paul Veronese delighted the Venetians. The more fashionable and ceremonious private life in the city became, the more were the people charmed with his simple rendering.

Gradually the taste of the Venetians turned towards pictures in humble quarters—in the provincial towns and in the country. In the Middle Ages the country was so upset that it was not safe for people to venture out of the city; but with the advance of civilisation this state of affairs was altered. People began to delight in country life. The aristocracy took villas in the provinces, and

A QUIET RIO

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the poorer people wanted representations of them in their houses. The painters of the period, Palma and Bonifacio, began to add pastoral backgrounds to their works. But the first great landscape painter was Jacopo Bassano. His treatment of light and atmosphere was masterly, and his colouring was jewel-like and brilliant. It was Bassano who started that great Spanish school which was to culminate in Velasquez. Venice did not produce many great painters in the eighteenth century—only three or four. The city itself remained unchanged: it was just as beautiful, still the most beautiful and luxurious city in the world: it was the people who changed. They became apathetic, placid, and drifting, perfectly contented with one another and with their lots in life, never trying to better themselves in any way. There were no difficulties, no problems to be solved. People were just as gay as they were serious, just as much interested in paintings as they were in politics. This was a vegetable period.

It is strange that such a demoralising time should have seen the rise of a great master; but it certainly saw him in Canaletto. That artist differed from nearly all the Venetian painters in that he had complete mastery of technique. His

work is just as fine technically as that of Velasquez or that of Rembrandt. It shows marvellous dexterity and power. He understood his materials better than any other Venetian painter—better even than Giorgione.

Guardi and Tiepolo followed Canaletto. In Tiepolo's work especially you realise the character of these eighteenth-century people. At that time Venice was sliding downhill rapidly. Her people were aping dignity. They dressed extravagantly, not so much for the love of colour and splendour as for swagger. They were degenerating rapidly. Here and there lesser masters appeared; but Venetian art became poorer and poorer, until it reached the condition of the present day, when in Venice there is no art at all. The kind of work which the people appreciate sickens and saddens you—those sunlit photographs glazed with blue to counterfeit moonlight, and tricky, vicious water-colours,—brutal pictures with metallic reflections and cobalt skies,—all wonderfully alike, all with the same orange sail, and all equally untrue.

Year by year painters continue to paint Venice without the public showing signs of weariness. Perhaps the failure of the artists to reproduce the undying charm of that dazzling jewel of cities is

HUMBLE QUARTERS

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both the excuse and the reason for the pertinacity of the tribe. Womanlike, she eludes them; manlike, they pursue. Few have seen the real Venice, the Venice of Ruskin and Turner and Whistler. Venice is not for the cold-blooded spectator, for the amateur or the art dabbler: she is for the enthusiastic colourist and painter, the man who sees, and does not merely look.

Sir Edward Burne-Jones was wont to declare that to paint Venice as she should be painted one must needs live for three thousand years: the first thousand should be devoted to experiments in various media; the second to producing works and destroying them; the third to completing slowly the labour of centuries. He would never have dreamed of spending a painting holiday beyond Italy—that is, unless he had been permitted to live for over five thousand years; and even then, it was his firm opinion, no man could paint St. Mark's, which was unpaintable—mere pigment could not suggest it.

RIO DI SAN MARINA

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STREETS, SHOPS, AND COURTYARDS

A SQUERO OR BOAT-BUILDING YARD

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STREETS, SHOPS, AND COURTYARDS

In the crooked and bewildering streets of Venice, which open out from the great piazza and lead all over the city, one sees the true life of the people. It is there that the poor congregate. The houses teem with humanity. There the true Venetians are harboured. One comes to know them well, and the manner of life they lead; and so gay and light-hearted are they, it is strange if one does not like them in spite of all their faults. Was there ever more irregularity than in the streets of Venice? All the houses seem to be differently constructed. Some are lofty; others are squat; some have balconies and chimney-pieces thrust out into the street so as almost to touch the houses opposite. Nearly every house has at one time been a palace, and each is in a different stage of decay—houses that have once been the homes of merchant princes, palaces

in which perhaps even Petrarch may have feasted, —inhabited now by the poorest of Venetians. The weekly wash flutters from the balconies (the linen of Venice is famed for its whiteness), and frowsy heads appear at Gothic windows. Worms have eaten and rust has corrupted everything destructible. Yet now and then one is astonished at the preservation of certain portions of the buildings. In that labyrinth of streets one never knows what surprise may be in store. You will come across beautiful early-Gothic gateways covered with sculptured relief and inlaid designs of leaves; a fourteenth-century palace with the faint remains of the paintings of some artist with which at one time it must have been covered; lovely remnants of crosses let into the walls; Renaissance wells of the sixteenth century; delicately-carved parapets; a great stone angel standing guardian at some calle head; irregularly twisted staircases of the fifteenth century; a Gothic door with terra-cotta mouldings; and churches without number. Some of the finest architectural gems in Europe are here, and almost every house is invested with a strange history. The place seems inexhaustible. As you walk in those old streets the shadows of the mighty dead go with you — those great

THE WEEKLY WASH

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men who lived glorious lives for Venice and for art. There is an old-world atmosphere about the streets. They twist and turn, and sometimes are so narrow that there is scarcely room for two people to pass each other; at times they are so dark and still that the scuttling of a rat into the water makes one start. Venice is full of contrasts, full of the unexpected. It is as if Providence, seeing fit that one's eyes should not become satiated with beauty unalloyed, throws in little marring touches—shocks to your feelings, cold douches of water, as it were—in order to give value to the marvellous colouring and antiquity of the water city. For example, from the world of Desdemona, where one can fancy one sees her lean from a traceried window and catch a distant echo of a mellow voice out on the water singing a serenade, it is rather a shock suddenly to find yourself in the piazza of St. Mark. It is easy to lose oneself in the streets of Venice. In a minute you can step from the past to the present, and find yourself among the marbles of St. Mark's and the arcades of the Ducal Palace—in the tourist's Venice, amid glittering shops full of modern atrocities, mosaic jewellery, wood-carving, imitation glass, and what not—Americans and other globe-trotters

staring up at St. Mark's, laughing and reading their guide-books.

For all artists and lovers of the picturesque the side streets of Venice—*calle*, as they are called—are fascinating beyond words. Every house has a character peculiarly its own. Each is in a way unique and totally dissimilar to its fellows; each is proud in the possession of relics of architectural beauties. Every street is made up of magnificent palaces and churches, fine examples of architecture in such rich and varied wealth and diversity of styles that one is almost overpowered. There are old Gothic palaces, venerable specimens of Renaissance or Venetian period. Time indeed has laid heavy hands upon them; but it seems to have augmented their charm. This homely aspect of Venice interests. The old houses and the rickety archways appeal to the observer, if he be not too keen of smell. Here are marvellous and varied combinations of rich colouring — weather-worn bricks, grated windows, and brilliant shutters picturesque and shabby by the lapse of time, and shops half lost in gloom. Most of the houses are of distempered rose-colour at the top and moss-green at the bottom. The sun shines on the roof, and the water laps at the base. There are land-gates

A BACK STREET

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and water-gates to most of the houses—one opening upon a canal, the other upon a courtyard.

I lived for six months in Venice, and have seen these streets under every possible aspect. I have seen them in the early morning, at mid-day, in the evening, at night, in the rain, in the sun; and I can never decide at what time of the day they appear most fascinating. Perhaps it is after a rain-shower, when every tone upon the old walls is brought out and accentuated—greys and pale sea-greens and the old Venetian red with which so many of the houses used to be distempered. The shops in Venice are very thickly set. Most of them open right down to the ground, and the wares, which are varied, appear to ooze out into the street. Here is a corn-dealer's shop with open sacks of polenta flour of every shade of yellow; there a green-grocer's shop where vegetables are sold—such a wealth of colour in the piles of tomatoes, vegetable marrows, and great pumpkins cut down the middle to display their orange cores. The richer shops, however, are blocked up several feet high, and have latticed windows.

I love to wander through these streets at night, when the squalor and the misery of Venetian life are hidden by the darkness, and one sees only

beauty. Here are subjects for the etcher, for Rembrandt and Frans Hals,—marvellous effects of light and shade. The streets are pitch-dark; there is nothing to mar the lovely fair blue nights of Venice—no vicious shaft of electric light to bleach the colour from the sky. These side streets are lit by the candle and the lamp. Perhaps the most picturesque of all the shops at night are the wine-shops. There one sees, beneath some low blackened doorway, a rich golden-brown interior. In the midst of this golden gloom one dim oil-lamp is burning—the most perfect light possible from the painter's standpoint: by it, the dark faces and gesticulating hands of the men gathered round a table are turned to deep orange. This is all one sees growing from out the encircling gloom—faces, hands, and a few flecks of ruby light, as the glasses are raised. Every shop down these narrow streets has its shrine to the Virgin Mary, with its statuette, its fringes, and its flowers; and at night these shrines are illuminated according to the poverty or the wealth of the proprietor—some have only a tiny dip, others have a candle or a group of candles, while well-to-do folk boast a row of oil-lamps. Rich or poor, each has its offering, its tiny beacon. The children may go

A FACTORY GIRL.

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without bread, and the mother may lack warm clothing; but the Holy Mother must not be robbed of her due. There is certainly a wonderful simplicity of faith about these people. The cook-shops are fascinating by night. There are innumerable stalls; in fact, nearly all the shopping seems to be done from stalls; even the butchers have open-air stalls. At night chestnut-roasters, toffee-vendors, pumpkin-and-hot-pear men hold full sway. These are generally surrounded by groups of open-mouthed children gazing with delight at the long twisted strings of toffee in the hands of the operator. Almost a still greater attraction to the young folk of Venice is the chestnut-roaster; he generally takes up his position in the courtyards, as does the coffee-roaster. Courtyards seem to be the favourite haunts of the coffee-roasters,—partly, I suppose, because all the doors of the houses round about open into them, and housewives can be easily supplied. They seem to be constantly roasting coffee berries night and day; the whole place reeks with the fragrant odour. They are picturesque by day, these busy workers, but far more picturesque by night, when the gleam of their ovens shows orange in the purple gloom, and the leaping flames light up the faces of

the children round about, handsome little faces with a certain grandeur in them — boys with bronze cheeks, dark hair, olive complexions, black eyes, and sometimes a touch of colour in their red flannel caps and their multicoloured patches of garments. There is something barbaric and fine and graceful about them, half-encircled, as they are, by the filmy blue smoke from the ovens. A Venetian Good Friday celebrated in a poor and populous part of Venice at night is most picturesque. The people of the quarter—the coffee-roasters, the cook-shop men, the footmen, and the wine-sellers—arrange to sing a chant in twenty-four verses, a grave and sombre chant following the life of our Lord in His Passion. Each verse takes about five minutes to sing, and there is a pause of equal length between each two verses. During every interval the crowd, who have been quiet, begin to chatter, the men smoke, and the boys rush and tumble. Directly the precentor begins, silence falls upon them once more. Most of the people in that particular quarter subscribe to the erection of a shrine with plenty of candles and little glass lamps. It is a picturesque sight—the yellow light from the altar lamps falling on the group of men and women gathered round the

singers and the many heads thrust out of windows and balconies, on the fair, devout, and serious faces of the children, on the handsome women and the bronze-faced men.

All the world in Venice lives out of doors: they breakfast and lunch and dine, all in the open air. All of them live in lodgings or hotels, and principally in the bedrooms, which are for the most part comfortless and dreary,—their only merits are a frescoed ceiling, sometimes really fine and old, and a balcony. One can procure a marvel of a palace in Venice for the cost of a garret in London. There is no real home-life in Venice. Rich and poor, mothers, fathers, children, and servants,—all take their food in the open air. There are restaurants and cafés for the well-to-do, endless eating-houses for the poorer classes, and sausage-makers for the gondoliers. Cookshops swarm. There you see great piles of fish and garlic, bowls of broth, polenta, and stewed snails, roast apples, boiled beans, cabbages, and potatoes. Every holiday, every saint's day, has its special dish. Carnival time sets the fashion for beaten cream or panamonlata; at San Martino gingerbread soldiers are popular; and for Christmas time there is candy made with honey and almonds. A certain broth consumed by

the very humblest is made from scraps of meat which even the sausage-makers will not use: as may be imagined, the soup is highly flavoured. In the midst of all these stalls and eating-houses it is extraordinary how little there is eaten in Venice,—merely a mouthful here and there,—a kind of light running meal. A Venetian, no matter how rich he might be, would never dream of inviting you to a set meal. There is no heavy food, no cut from the joint. If a Venetian invites you to an entertainment, he will give you a cup of coffee perhaps, or a glass of wine and a biscuit,—rarely more. He will never invite you to eat a great meal; he never takes it himself. The eating-house and the stall appear to be more or less of an excuse for gossip and the meeting of neighbours.

If the streets of Venice are bewitching by night, they are certainly delightful in the early morning. It is then that one receives the most vivid impressions. There is a certain freshness in one's perceptions at the dawn. The poor wretches who make their beds in the streets, or on the steps, or at the base of columns, shake themselves and shamble off. Troops of ragged "facchini" fill the streets, and quarrel noisily over their work. The great cisterns in the market-place are open, and the water is

HOUSEHOLD CARES

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brought round to your house by dealers, stout young girls with broad backs and rosy cheeks; they carry it in two brass buckets attached to a pole, and empty it into large earthenware pots placed ready for its reception in the kitchen. These girls, called "bigolanti," supply the place of water-works. At this hour you see the shops opening like so many flowers before the sun. Butchers set forth their meat; fruit shops, crockery shops, bakers', cheap-clothing, and felt-hat shops, show their various wares. You see peasants at work among vegetables, building cabbages and carrots into picturesque piles, and decorating them with garlic and onions, while their masters are still sleeping on sacks of potatoes. Great barges arrive from Mestre, Chioggia, and Torcello, laden with vegetables and fruit. Eating-houses begin their trade. You see men and women taking their breakfast, and a savoury smell of spagettis and eels on gridirons fills the air. Gondoliers begin to wash their gondolas, brush their felces, polish the iron of their prows, shake their cushions, and put everything in order for business. Picturesque old women, carrying milk in fat squat bottles, make the round of the hotels and restaurants at this early hour. They are good to look at, with their dark nut-

brown faces and dangling gold earrings under their large straw hats. Their figures are much the shape of their bottles; and they bring a pleasant atmosphere into Venice, an atmosphere of fields and clover-scented earth, and milk drawn from the cream-coloured cows. Fishermen, a handsome class, with weather-beaten faces, in blue clothing, come striding down the calle, shallow baskets of fish on their heads. They set up their stalls and display their soles and mackerel, chopping up their eels into sections and crying, "Beautiful, and all alive!" At this hour everyone is making bargains, and the result is a continual buzz; but there is nothing discordant about the street cries of Venice. A peculiarly beautiful cry is that of the man who comes round every morning with wood for your kitchen fire. The fuel-men cut their wood on the shores of the Adriatic, and anchor their barges at the Custom House, leaving them in charge of mongrel yellow dogs, who guard so vigilantly and are so extremely aggressive that never a splinter is taken from the barges.

The street cries are full of individuality, and the tradesman brings a little art to bear on the description of his wares. The song of the sweep, exquisitely sad, quite befits the warning, "Beware

THE WOODEN SPOON SELLER

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of your chimney!" There is nothing gay about the sweep: he is a very melancholy person, and his expression is in sympathy with his music. The pumpkin-vendor is coy, and his cry has a winning pathos; his is not an easy vegetable to launch on the market, and he has developed into a very bashful person. His cry is cooing and subtle: he almost caresses you into buying, which is necessary, as no one in his right senses really desires a pumpkin. The fruiterer is different. He is handsome, fat-cheeked, and has scarlet lips, strong black hair curling in ringlets, and gold rings in his ears. His adjuration is a round, full, resonant roar, like a triumphant hymn; and there is altogether a certain Oriental splendour about his demeanour. It is not necessary for him to be subtle: there is always a sale for melons and pears, chestnuts and pomegranates. He uses colour as a stimulant to his customers, and dwells upon the hue of his fruit. "Melons with hearts of fire!" he cries. Also he flatters. To a dear old gentleman passing by he will hold up a clump of melons, some of them sliced, or a group of richly coloured pomegranates, and say, "Now, you as a man of taste will appreciate this marvellous colour; you are young enough to understand the fire and beauty

of these melons"; and the old gentleman will go on his way feeling quite pleased and youthful. Some of the cries are quaint. I once heard a man say, "Juicy pears that bathe your beard!" and another said his peaches were "ugly but good,"—they certainly were not beautiful to look upon. Almost the most melodious salesmen are the countrymen who pace the streets with larks and finches in cages, and roses and pinks in pots.

At mid-day the streets are enveloped in a warm golden light; there are rich old browns, orange yellows, and burnt siennas—all the tints of a gorgeous wall-flower. A ray of sun in a bric-à-brac shop attracts your attention; and you get a peep through a window with cobwebbed panes, high up in a flesh-coloured wall, at some of the objects within,—brass pots and pans gleam from the walls, bits of china and porcelain, strings of glass beads, some quaint old bookcases with saints carved in ivory, fragments of old brocade woven with gold and gorgeous,—all kinds of strange curiosities, looking crisp and brilliant in the sunlight. Suddenly you are blinded by a patch of golden yellow. It is an orange-stall placed before a pink palace flecked with the delicate tracery of luminous violet shadow. Away down in the interior of the stall, where the

IN THE MARKET PLACE

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sun does not shine, it appears almost purple by contrast to the brilliant mass of golden fruit. The background of all these shops is neutral: the objects for sale form the only brilliant and positive colour.

The palaces and houses are mostly pink and white. There are pinks, and greys, and blues, and so on. It is not the painted, coloured city that one had imagined it to be: Venice is very grey. But its greyness is that of the opal and the pearl. I have often heard people say how strange it is that the colours always seem brighter in Venice than in any other city—the shutters and the doors and the shops. The answer is not far to seek. It is because the background and the general colouring is neutral. There are no large patches of positive colour: even St. Mark's, chokefull of colour as it is, has no positive colour in its composition. Take a peep into a carpenter's shop. Through the iron grating, rusty and red with age, you see the quaint old craftsman at work, his flesh tone very much the colour of the wood he is planing; piercing black eyes look through and over the large bone-framed glasses that he wears; he suggests the carpenter of Japan; and, judging from the amount of shavings you see about the

floor, you gather that he is a dignified, not what may be called a feverish, worker. He is, however, evidently an artist: you see dainty specimens of wood-carving hung round on the walls. Most of the carpenters of Venice seem to be old men. There appear to be very few middle-aged people at all. They seem to be either young boys and girls or ancient men and women. Whether it is that Venetians age quickly, I do not know. The old women are extraordinary. You can scarcely imagine how anything so crooked and foul and old and frowsy, with so little hair, so few teeth, so many protruding bones, and such parchment-like skin, can be human. Their faces seem to be shrunken like old fruit: I have seen women with noses shrivelled and with dents in them like strawberries. It is extraordinary to watch these women on their shopping excursions. How they bargain! They think nothing of starting the day before to buy a piece of steak, and sometimes spend a whole day haggling over it. Some of the shopmen are swindlers,—fat, greasy men, very fresh and brisk, who have reduced cheating to a fine art.

It is only after living in Venice for some months that one begins to understand the bargaining in the streets. You will see two men talking—one

WORK GIRLS

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the shopman, the other the purchaser—and if you know anything of the language, and watch carefully, you will find it the most marvellous bit of acting imaginable. They bargain; the customer turns in scorn, and goes; he is called back; the goods are displayed once more, and their merits expatiated upon. The customer laughs incredulously and moves away. The seller then tries other tactics to fog his client. Eventually he makes a low offer, which is accepted; but even then the shopman gets the best of it, for he has a whole battery of the arts of measurement in reserve. There is really no end to the various possibilities of "doing" a man out of a halfpenny.

Beggars are a great trial in the streets. The lame, the halt, and the blind breathe woe and pestilence under your window, and long monotonous whines of sorrow Fat friars in spectacles and bare feet come round once a month begging bread and fuel for the convents. Old troubadours serenade you with zithers, strumming feebly with fingers that seem to be all bone, and in thin quavering voices pipe out old ditties of youth and love.

There are lottery offices everywhere. Around them there is always a great excitement. The

missing number, printed on a card framed in flowers and ribands, is placed in the windows daily. Some say that the system of lottery should be done away with; but it might be cruel to deprive the poor wretches of hope. The lottery brings joy to many despairing people.

Venetian women are good-looking. One sees them continually about the streets. Nothing can surpass the grace of the shawl-clad figures seen down the perspective of the long streets, or about some old stone well in a campiello. They are for the most part smart and clean. You see them coming home from the factories, nearly always dressed in black, simple and well-behaved. Their hair is of a crisp black, and well tended; their manner is sedate and demure. There is no boisterousness about the Venetian girls, no turning round in the streets, no coarseness. Many of them are very beautiful. You see a woman crossing an open space with the sunlight gleaming on the amber beads about her throat and making the rich colour glow brighter beneath her olive skin. A shawl is thrown round her shoulders, and her jet-black hair is fastened by a silver pin. She wears a deep crimson bodice. The choice of colour of these women is unerring in taste. Their shawls are

BEAD STRINGERS

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seldom gaudy, generally of blue or pale mauve; vivid colours are reserved for the bodices.

Then, there are the bead-stringers. You see them everywhere: handsome girls with a richness of southern colour flushing beneath warm-toned skins, eyes large and dark, with heavy black lashes, the hair twisted in knots low on their necks, and swept back in large waves from square foreheads, a string of coloured beads round their necks, and flowered linen blouses with open collars. You see them with their wooden trays full of beads. The bead-stringers are nearly always gay. They laugh and chat as they run the beads on the strings. They often form a very pretty picture, as they bend over their work and thread turquoise beads from wooden trays.

In the courtyards, some women are hanging white clothes on a line before a yellow wall; others are leaning out of their windows, gossiping with neighbours. Never was there a more gossiping set of women: every window, every balcony, seems to be thronged with heads thrust out to chatter.

Venice is divided up into campi—small towns. Each campo has a church, a butcher, a baker, a candlestick-maker, and everything else that is necessary to life, including a café and a market.

Venetian children, as a rule, are very badly reared, and many of them die at an early age. It is a belief and a consolation that the little ones go straight to heaven, there to plead their parents' cause and to arrange for their reception.

May is the best month in which to see the streets. The intoxication of spring is in the air, and in the bright sunlight the colours burn and glow. Although you cannot see them, you are constantly reminded that there are gardens in Venice. Suddenly over the red brickwork of a high wall you will see clumps of tamarisk, hanging mauve wisteria, or the scarlet buds of a pomegranate, while the scent of syringa and banksia roses fills the air, the birds sing in the enclosure, and the perfume of honeysuckle trails over the wall of a garden of a foreign prince. Few crowds are more cheerful or better ordered than a Venetian crowd. There is a light-heartedness about these people that is very engaging; they have a marvellous frankness of manner, a sublime indifference to truth. The smallest Venetian child is a born flatterer, and will tell you, not what he thinks, but what he imagines you wish to hear. The people are the most engaging in the world, free from care or doubt as to right or wrong.

This carelessness is characteristic of the whole Italian race. Venetians give the impression of being always determined to enjoy life to the full. They are continually coming together, for the purpose of pleasure, on one pretence or another, and the flashes of wit in the street are sometimes very amusing. The Venetians have always been, and still are, a great festa-loving people. When the Republic fell, the brave ceremonies came to an end; but the original passion is still kept alive. The festa in Venice are chiefly of religious character. For example, once a year each parish church honours the feast of its patron saint by processions to all shrines within that particular parish. Very picturesque are the streams of priests and people crossing the bridges and passing along the fondanta of some small canal,—a brilliant ribbon of vermilion and gold winding through the grey-toned city: porters of the church (in blouses of white, red, and blue) bearing candles, pictures, and banners; bands playing the gayest operatic tunes; priests and the parocco carrying the Host under a canopy of cloth of gold; long files of the devout holding candles; and boys with crackers and guns. At night there is dancing in the largest campo of the parish. On Good Friday the streets resemble

a feast rather than a fast. The people are in their best and gaudiest clothes; children are rushing and romping and turning somersaults, whirling their rattles, fitting up shrines and then appealing to the crowd for coppers,—human mites of six or seven constructing "Santo Sepolcro," or Holy Graves, from old bottles, sprigs of bay stuck in, and odd candle-ends. One may witness touches of sentiment in a Venetian crowd; but the depths are seldom stirred. Sometimes sentiment finds expression in the rilotti—popular Venetian songs.

ON THE LAGOON

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THE ISLANDS OF THE LAGOON

CHIOGGIA FISH MARKET

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THE ISLANDS OF THE LAGOON

THERE is no piece of water more extraordinary than the lagoons of Venice. They cover an area of 184 square miles of water, shut off from the sea by a narrow strip of sandy islands, which are called the Lidi. The form of the lagoons is, roughly, that of a bent bow. How did they happen to be formed thus? That is a difficult question, and there are various opinions. Certainly the lagoons are a great feature of the city. They gave shelter to the founders flying from the Huns on the mainland, and the health of the community depends on their regular ebb and flow. A lagoon is not a lake; neither is it a swamp, nor open sea. It is a strange piece of natural engineering. There are really, although we cannot see them at high tide, four distinct water systems, with separate watersheds and confluent streams. The sea comes in once a

day as from a great heart, pulsing in through the four breaks in the Lido barrier, cleaning and purifying the lagoon, and afterwards bearing away the refuse of the city. At low tide one can see these channels distinctly winding in and out of the mud-banks. In the spring they are bare, with long trails of sea-grass. In autumn they are brown and bare, and at high tide the whole surface is flooded. On the mainland shore of the lagoon there is a certain territory, called Laguna Morta, where the sea and the land fight a continual battle. It is the home of the wildfowl. Here salt sea-grasses grow, tamarisk, samphire, and, in the autumn, sea lavender. Farther, the ground becomes solid, and the Venetian plain begins, with its villas, poplars, vineyards, and mulberry groves.

Nothing is more delightful than to spend a whole long day upon the lagoon when the air is sweet and the breeze is fresh from the Lido. There are fishing-boats coming in from their long night, with spoil for the Rialto market, crossing and recrossing one another as they tack. The bows are painted, and the nets are hung mast-high to be mended and dried in the sun. Their sails are folded close together, like the wings of great vermilion moths. These sails, which are picturesque in the Venetian

THE LIDO

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landscape, are of the deepest oranges and reds, rich red browns, orange yellows, and burnt siennas, contrasting strangely with the cool grey waters of the lagoon upon which they float.

One can wander for miles along the Lido on the Adriatic side. The lizards bask in the hot sand; the delicate, pale sea-holly mingles with the yellow of the evening primrose. From the Lido you can see right away to the south-east, and in the horizon can discern the faint blue hills above Trieste and the top of Monte Maggiore. From there the city looks well: one sees the Ducal Palace, faintly pink, the green woods of the public gardens, and the vast blue Venetian sky. The true native seems to have a strange affection for the Lido. One cannot tell why or wherefore; but it is so—"Lido" has ever been a name to conjure with. One cannot tell what associations and sensations of pleasure and charm are connected with it. At the present day it is a flat piece of somewhat marshy ground, with large gardens intersected by canals.

The woods of the Favorita, on the shore of San Elizabetta, are delightful, with their groves of acacia and catalpas, where the ground is carpeted with wild flowers, and the grass is greener than elsewhere in Venice, and the nodding violets grow.

Behind the acacia grove there is a Protestant burial-ground where rest the bones of many Englishmen who came to Venice for pleasure and stayed to die. The tomb of our ambassador, Sir Francis Vincent, is here. A beautiful walk is towards the ramparts of San Nicolo, where the blackbirds sing in the old convent garden, and in summer crimson poppies, purple salvias, and vivid green grass are luxuriant. San Nicolo di Bari is the patron saint of sailors. They have erected a magnificent church dedicated to his memory on the most beautiful point of the Lido. Here the crews of the merchantmen and warships of the Republic would linger for a while before sailing, to ask a blessing on their voyage. The saint's remains do not really rest here. Venice failed in her endeavour to obtain them by force from the people of Bari; but she spread the fiction among the people. To this day the sailors of the lagoon firmly believe that San Nicolo still watches over and protects them, and when in doubt or danger are enabled by the campanile of his church to find the direct course to the Lido port. At the Lido is the cemetery of the Jews. The graves are covered with sand and vegetation, and children never hesitate to dance on them,—in fact, to do so is a favourite pastime. If one remonstrates, they

CHIOGGIA

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will look at you with wide-open eyes, and explain that these are only graves of Jews,—a Jew with the Venetians being no better than a dog. The grave of a Christian is treated with the greatest reverence: even the children and the gondoliers salute it as they pass. There is something pathetic about the Jewish graves, from the stones over which the inscriptions have been effaced.

Chioggia is one of the greater islands. It has a large town with an immensely broad street and a wide canal. Here is the most famous and most picturesque fish-market of all suburban Venice. In it one comes across the finest Venetian types, magnificent models for painters, bronzed Giorgione figures and black-eyed swarthy women. Their dialect is beautiful, far more so than that of Venice proper; and at night Ariosto is read publicly in the streets by a musical sweet-voiced Chiozzotto. Here the dramatist Goldoni lived, and the painter Rosalba Carrera, and the composer Giuseppe Zarlino. Chioggia reminds one of the Jewish quarter in the east end of London. The people, mostly fishermen, are extremely poor.

This is the place for colour. There is colour everywhere—in the sails of the boats, in the costume of the people, and even in the red cotton

curtains of the churches. Unfortunately, one's stay there was brief—because of the insects. A fisherman in Chioggia took us for a sail. We had bargained for an hour's journey; but we had not been out for more than ten minutes before he landed us on the rocks and demanded five francs. We were entirely at his mercy, and were forced to concede; but his action struck us as being high-handed. Sometimes the fishermen of Chioggia, if they are so inclined, will tell you tales of Angelica and Orlando, and the pageant of the Carolingian myth.

Torcello is one of the most interesting islands of the lagoon. It is seven miles from Venice, and a pathway is made to it through the sea by stakes. The island is for the most part a waste of wild sea moor. Grey and lifeless in colour, it is a desolate place, and you feel as if you were at the end of the world. At one time it was extremely populous; but now it is impossible to live there, because the marshes breed malaria. Any count whose title and estates the Venetians deem improbable they call "the count from Torcello." One passes six miles of the most beautiful scenery on the way thither. The entrance is by a canal, and the banks on either side are covered with dwarf bushes and

A FISHERMAN OF THE LAGOON

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lilac trees. Thirteen hundred years ago the grey moorland looked much as it does now—except that where a city stood the cattle feed, what was once the piazza of the city is a grassy meadow, and a narrow pathway is the only street. Two hundred years after the invasion of Attila, the inhabitants of Aquileia and Altinum, with their most precious possessions, flew from their houses to the island of Torcello. Now there is scarcely a sign of human habitation; and only the ruins of an old quay, an ancient well, foundations of marble buildings, a great church, and a campanile, are left to show what at one time was a populous city, which was called the mother of Venice. By the remains of these buildings one can see that they were constructed by men in great distress, seeking a shelter, yet not wishing to attract the eyes of their enemies by their splendour. The church of Torcello shows force and simplicity of character, and a certain reverent religious feeling on the part of its founders. Everything is on a small and humble scale. The columns which support the roof are no higher than a man. Yet these columns are of pure Greek marble, and the capitals are enriched with delicate sculpture. One sees everywhere in this church an earnest and simple desire to do

honour to God in the temple they were erecting, and that it should not form too great a contrast to the churches they had loved and seen destroyed. Torcello is equally delightful in springtime and in autumn. In spring the orchards are in full bloom, and the hedges throw their pink and white sprays of thorn against the sky. In autumn the water meadows are a shimmer of purple and red from the masses of feathery lavender that grow there. It has much the same colour and feeling as a Scotch moor. Torcello is interesting from its venerable traditions, its desolation, its wildness, and its profound silence.

There are many expeditions on which one could go if one had the time to spare. For example, there is an island near Torcello called San Francisco in Deserto. The name is well applied: St. Francis' island certainly stands in a desert. There is still an islet monastery of the Franciscan order. The brethren show you with much enthusiasm a stone coffin in which the founder of the convent was in the habit of lying in order to acclimatise himself to the sensation of death. Also there is pointed out a penitential cell which was once inhabited by the saint, and a tree (said to have sprung from his staff) which he planted.

IN MURANO

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This legend may sound mythical; but perhaps it may not be so. It is quite possible for a staff, even if it has lain by for some time, to shoot out in several places in green sprigs; and one of these, cut in proper manner, might easily take root and grow into a tree. The real charm of the island lies in the garden of the monastery, where narcissus are abundant and there is a great avenue of cypresses, the finest in Venice.

Triporti is different: in fact, no other island of the lagoon is quite like it. Here are great sweeps of sandy land covered with coarse grass and heather and pools of brackish water. The island is more or less uncultivated, and the air is full of strange aromatic odours from the sea. It is a marvellous place to bathe in: the sand is fine and soft and yellow, and the sea lies wide open before you, warm and limpid.

If you have any doubt as to where Murano is, look for a great black cloud hovering over an island; and you may be sure that there are the glass factories of Murano. Glass-making is the only industry now practised in the lagoon. The factories are no longer numerous, Murano having declined from her ancient splendour. The secret of the magician is exposed; and Murano has no

longer the monopoly of bevelled mirrors, great glasses, and crystal balls. Such work is executed in Birmingham quite as well as in Murano. The old art is lost. Still, Murano is interesting. There is perhaps more life in it than in any other of the islands. Workmen sift glass upon the pavement; women, at the doors, sit busily knitting, or stringing beads; fishermen, clothed in a dark greenish grey, are disentangling their nets, which hang over the boats in apparently inextricable confusion; there are street vendors of all kinds, calling out the nature of their wares to the passer-by. There are five thousand inhabitants in the city of Murano. Its grand canal is almost as broad as that of Venice. The beautiful palaces, with their doors and windows of marble,—some of red Verona marble, some deeply enriched with mouldings, others with arcades of a singular grace and delicacy—are now inhabited by the very poorest of the poor. The church of San Donato, the Matrice or mother church of Murano, stands in a field of fresh green grass. It is said that a virgin appeared in a vision to its founder, Otho the Great, showing him this very meadow overgrown with scarlet lilies, and bidding him erect a church there in her honour. Murano, on the

MRS. EDEN'S GARDEN IN VENICE

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whole, is a dreary little town. Wealth, beauty, and elegance have passed away; the country is devoted to cabbages and potato patches. Still, it has charm even in its decay. How beautiful Murano must have been at the time when Cardinal Bembo and so many famous literati lived there! It must have been an earthly paradise, with its luxurious vegetation, lordly palaces, and magnificent gardens. In this city the horse is a quaint and unexpected animal. He is not wanted. He is quite as ridiculous and useless as a unicorn would be in the streets of London. He annoys one, this strange beast,—making one think of mountains, valleys, fields, trees, streets, and carriages, at a time when one is eager to be satisfied with sparkling lagoons, gondolas, and a palace for hotel.

The gardens in Venice have a character all their own. They are highly prized, for space is scarce. The soil is rich, formed of lagoon mud; but only certain plants will grow freely in it—because of the salt air. The variety that will bloom, however, is quite enough to make a good show—flowering and aromatic shrubs, roses (especially banksia), most bulbs, and (blooming the finest and happiest of all in Venetian soil) carnations, the "garofoli" which play so large a part in Italian love-stories.

On the Giudecca there are two gardens, each quite different from the other in character and appearance, but both illustrating what a Venetian garden may be like. In one all the resources of art and wealth have been brought to bear, and there is a succession of brilliant beds of colour. In the middle is a green oasis, a kind of English orchard, where the turf is as fine and as velvety, as deep and green, as that of any English lawn, and the orchard trees throw a delicate tracery of flickering shadows. There are beds of splendid colour, varying with the seasons. In fact, there is almost an Oriental lavishness about this garden: the scent of the flowers is almost oppressive. The other garden is not less beautiful; but it is set apart for profit rather than for pleasure. There are aisles upon aisles of vine-covered pergolas, crossing one another; and one can saunter down these cool promenades for hours, absolutely bareheaded. A narrow strip is divided from the rest of this garden by a thick hedge. Here, in one glorious mass, are all the flowers that will grow freely in Venice—the flame-coloured trumpets of the bigonici, by bowers of roses over-arching walks, banksias festooning the walls, and one corner completely filled by a splendid *Daphne odorifera*, which by her perfume draws the

TIMBER BOATS FROM THE SHORES OF THE ADRIATIC

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SHIPPING OFF THE GIUDECCA

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butterflies. However, one cannot quite understand the spirit that prompted Alfred de Musset to write those verses the last of which runs:—

> À Saint Blaise, à la Zuecca,
> Dans les prés fleuris cuellir la verveine;
> À Saint Blaise, à la Zuecca,
> Vivre et mourrir là.

There are now at Saint Blaise no pastoral and poetic places where lovers could stroll hand in hand by the pale moonlight: the gardens, somewhat marshy, are cultivated principally for market purposes. The Giudecca Canal is the commercial harbour of Venice. The churches of Redentore and Maggiore lie on the farther side of it. In this canal a group of small vessels lie all day long at anchor—twenty or thirty of them, laden with wood brought from the Istrian coast, and sold in Venice. When it has been disposed of, the captain calls his crew from the distant cafés and wine-shops, releases the watch-dog from his post on deck, weighs anchor, and creeps down the Adriatic to reload again with fuel. This is all the Venetian commerce of to-day—this and a few beads, glass, wood-carving, lace, and bric-à-brac, such as would scarcely load a modern trading-ship. Nine hundred years ago the trade of Venice was important. By the close of

the eleventh century, the city was commercially supreme in Europe. Yet she manufactured nothing. She was supreme simply by the exercise of the merchant's calling. She was Europe's greatest ship-owning power and commercial head. Her merchants, conveying cloth, velvet, serge, canvas, various precious and commercial metals, glass beads, and other goods, received in return drugs, spices, dyes, precious stones, rugs, silks, brocades, cotton, and perfumes, which were sold at a high rate of profit. The population of Venice was then two hundred thousand; the annual exports were valued at ten million ducats; there were three hundred sea-going vessels, eight thousand sailing vessels, three thousand smaller craft, seventeen thousand mercantile sailors, and a powerful navy with eleven thousand able-bodied seamen.

In San Giorgio there is a wonderful entombment by Tintoretto. This is the place for red mullet from the Adriatic. Nothing equals the fish: none other is so appetising, so red and fresh in colour—one would feel inclined to eat of it if only for its hue. The best place to procure mullet is in a certain tavern where gondoliers and sailors mostly congregate: here they can drink wine free of duty. The tavern is invariably filled with such men, all

MIDDAY ON THE LAGOON

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BY A SQUERO OR BOAT-BUILDING YARD

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stretched out on benches round the table. San Giorgio is the place for sunsets also: from nowhere else in the lagoon can one see such a marvellous variety, such changes of sea and sky.

San Servolo is a very small island beyond San Giorgio, yet one of the brightest jewels in the coronet of the lagoon—almost entirely covered with buildings.

Burano has a population of some nine thousand. The people are chiefly engaged in fishing and in towing. One sees boatfuls of them returning from the sea; and lines of them towing heavy mud-filled barges on the way to Pordenone, all the men stepping in time with one another and bending to the rope with a will. There is something statuesque about these toilers. With their long, cleanly-moulded limbs, they remind one of ancient Egyptian bronzes. The sculptor would find plenty of scope in Burano. The people, however, are of evil repute by heredity. They are the scapegoats of the lagoon. If anything goes wrong, the blame is always laid upon them. They work harder and receive less pay than the inhabitants of any other island. In the old days terrible quarrels used to arise among the women, either in the market-place or when they sat in their doorways making that exquisite

lace for which the town is famous. To the present day lace is made at Burano, and even now the women quarrel over their work. If one did not know the language, one would not imagine that they were quarrelling—the dialect is so soft and sweet, the words dying away in a kind of sigh.

Mazzorbo is connected with Burano by a long wooden bridge. There are very few houses here, and very few inhabitants. The island is given up to flower gardens and the cultivation of fruit. Every day boats laden with fruit, to be sold at the Rialto, are sent to Venice. Most of the inhabitants of Mazzorbo are extraordinarily beautiful and sweet of nature. These characteristics are very often found among those whose business is chiefly connected with mother earth. Gardeners of all nationalities are generally gentle and charming persons.

San Lazzaro is where the Armenian monks spend their quiet lives, happy in the study and culture of their gardens. This convent of theirs is a gem of colour set on the lagoon, painted a deep crimson and looking like some gorgeous tropical flower. There is a terraced walk in the garden, and the cloister is rich in flowers and planted with cypress and oleander trees. It is a place in which

IN A SIDE STREET, CHIOGGIA

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to bask in the sun, and watch the crabs fighting with one another on the sloping wall. One can see the sun setting behind the Euganian hills, and watch the first stars appear and the piazza lights shine out.

Malamocco is not often visited by strangers; yet there is much that is beautiful in the place, and a certain old-world air that fascinates one. It is a good deal older than Venice; and its people, friendly and clean persons, are always careful to explain to you that they are not Venetians. The famous white asparagus, for which the evil-smelling mud makes excellent soil, grows plentifully in Malamocco.

San Elena was once an exceedingly lovely island. It lies near to the city, and is only a short distance from the public gardens. The grave of Helen, mother of Constantine the Great, at once an empress and a saint, is said to have been here. There was also a very beautiful Gothic cloister. Now the old monastery walls have been pulled down, and a hideous iron factory has been erected; the quiet convent cemetery has been dug up, and the crosses have been thrown aside to make way for iron-girded workshops.

For expeditions on the lagoons it is always well

to choose a pearly, silvery-grey day, when everything is delicate in colour and mellowed by a semi-transparent haze. The lagoons are not always grey and calm. They have their moods. I have seen a fair green sea grow black beneath a sudden storm. Sometimes Venice will appear blue and rosy, the smooth sea as green as in Canaletto's pictures, the white cupolas of Santa Maria della Salute and the silver domes of St. Mark's standing out as on an azure background. Then great masses of grey clouds will come up, the sea is festooned with foam, and black gondolas skim over the water like swallows flying before a storm. Sometimes the sky is clear and the light vivid, the water shines like silver, and one cannot tell the horizon from the sea; the islands appear like brown specks, and the ships seem to be sailing in the sky. At others the sea, under an east wind, is cold and hard as steel. In winter the lagoons are wrapped in damp mists, so thick that, however good a navigator you may be, you must needs lose your way; steamers and gondolas loom out and then disappear, swallowed up by the dense wall of vapour, and the shipping looks ghostly, tall and gaunt.

Away out in the remote and unfrequented

SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE

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regions of the lagoon are small isolated huts, mud-plastered, single-roomed cabins, built on piles, which guard certain valli, to which the fish are driven in the spring, to spawn. These consist of deep ditches surrounded by palisades of wattled cane. Here the men stay sometimes for days, fishing with nets, or standing upright in the long light boats waiting for their prey. Some of the valli have the most uncanny names: one is "The Val dell' Inferno," and another "The Val dei Sette Morte." Of this last there is a terrible story, which has taken deep root in the imagination of the people. Six fishermen were living in a valle. They had with them a boy, who, when they went out on the lagoon, stayed at home to cook for the men. One day, when they were returning with their boatload, they found the body of a drowned man floating out to sea. They picked the body up and laid it on the prow. The boy came to meet them, crying that breakfast was ready. When they were seated at their meal he asked why they had not brought the man who was lying in the prow. The fishermen said, jokingly, that he had better go and call him. This the child did, but soon returned with the news that he had shouted to the man in the prow, who had neither moved nor answered him.

"Go again," said the men. "He is a deaf old fool. You must shout and swear at him." The child went once more to the boat, and shouted and swore at the man; but still he would not wake. "Go out again and shake him by the leg, and tell him that we can't wait until doomsday for him," said the fishermen. So the boy went, climbed into the boat, and shook the man by the leg. This time the man in the prow sat up and said, "What do you want?" "Why don't you come?" asked the boy. "They can't wait until doomsday for you." "Go back," he said, "and tell them I am coming." The boy went back to the hut, and told the men, who were laughing and joking over their meal, that it was all right: the man in the prow was coming. At this the fishermen turned very pale and laughed no more. Then they heard heavy footsteps coming slowly up the path; the door was pushed open; the dead man came in, and sat down in the boy's place, making seven at the table. The eyes of the other six were fixed on the seventh, their guest. They could neither move nor speak. The blood grew colder and colder in their veins. When the sun rose and shone in at the window, it shone on seven dead men sitting round the table in the valle.

FISHERMEN OF THE MARINA

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Despite this tale, Venetian people are bright and essentially practical. They are not deeply imaginative. Horrors, weird fancies, and love of the preternatural are quite foreign to the Italian temperament.

SOCIAL UPS AND DOWNS

RIO E CHIESA DEGLI OGNISSANTI

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SOCIAL UPS AND DOWNS

A GREAT change came over society in Venice early in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The people were dull, and sullen, and poor. They resented their political position bitterly. The feeling with which they were possessed was their great hatred of the Austrians. They did not hate the Austrians individually; but they did politically, and therefore socially. If you wanted to know the Austrians, you could not know the Venetians: if you were friendly with either, you must cold-shoulder the others. Society in Venice was divided into two distinct sections. Once gone over to a side, you had no withdrawal. If a girl intermarried she was cut off for life from her family. Whatever the Venetian can or cannot do, he can certainly hate, and that well. He may be dull and dispirited; but he is fiercely patriotic, and his hatred of the Austrian was very strong. Most of

the nobility were exiled. The rest kept severely to themselves. They never attended popular festivities, and even among the poorer classes of Venetians very few old customs were kept up. The people felt keenly the contrast of what had been and what was. A bridge of boats was still built over the water to the church of the Redentore; but it was very little used. The carnival, which was wont to last for six weeks, was kept up but a single night; and then it was a farcical show. Only a few dressed-up beggars tore through the streets, singing songs at the cafés for drinks, and they were looked upon by the crowd with melancholy scorn.

Venetian people of good family seldom went to the play or to the opera. Austrian bands played there. The places of entertainment were mostly kept up by foreigners, and were consequently not what they might have been. To find good Italian opera one had to go to London or to Paris. Still, the Venetians love music. It is born in them: they have a passion for the art which nothing can subdue. Even the veriest street urchin sings his gutter song with a fervour such as we do not know of in the north. Despite the ban from which they suffered, the theatres were not uninteresting. Scarcely any

A CAMPIELLO

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Italian can act badly. Practically in every case he has the dramatic instinct. But there was no gay buzz in the audience, no flitting from box to box. The theatres were filled with Austrians, who took their pleasure quietly. The artisans and other poor Venetians, who saved up their money to go to the play, certainly did enjoy it. They cheered and hissed with vehemence, and between the acts drank aniseed and water, and ate candied fruits on sticks fashioned at the ends into toothpicks.

Marionette shows were very popular. The theatre was tiny, and the stage was tiny; everything was arranged in accordance with the small dimensions of the actors. The marionettes talked very volubly, so much so that it was sometimes difficult to follow them. The plays, written expressly for the marionettes, were of all descriptions, from melodrama to farce. Sometimes there were ballets. The audience was generally amusing. It consisted principally of boys. The hat was passed round, and if the proprietor considered that there was not sufficient money collected he would shout, "O you sons of dogs!" and close the theatre.

If any Venetian of good family gave a ball or a party, he was looked upon with suspicion by the poor, who had no holidays, no tips, small trade,

and large taxes. The Austrians gave balls and parties occasionally, but not very often. They hated Venice, where they were regarded as a pestilence, and shunned by all save their own countrymen. This strange antagonism continued for a few years, until the Austrian occupation ceased and Venice was united to the rest of Italy.

The Emperor of Austria's birthday afforded a good example of the inter-racial bitterness. All night long Austrian bands paraded the streets, cannons were fired at intervals, and fireworks let off. It seemed as though by unnecessary ostentation of artillery the Austrians were endeavouring to reach the throne in Vienna. But a dead silence reigned in Venice. Not a single Venetian was abroad. The Austrians had their celebrations all to themselves. It was rather pathetic to see them trying to work up joy and enthusiasm. Next morning the celebrations were continued. Service was held in St. Mark's Church; and the soldiers stood outside in the square in long rows, drawn to attention, the sun shining on their resplendent uniforms and handsome faces—a gallant array! Not a single Venetian showed himself. Not a blind was drawn. Not one curious woman's face

FISHING BOATS FROM CHIOGGIA

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appeared at a window. Even a Venetian servant girl would not have exchanged a civility with an Austrian officer that day. There was a dreadful hush everywhere. Venice was like a dead city. One felt that the people were stuffing their ears, and covering their eyes, behind drawn blinds. The Austrians tried hard to be jubilant and gay; but very obviously they did not succeed. In the evening they went to the opera, endeavouring to spread out and make more of themselves; but the large house was practically empty. The day after that, Venetian life flowed back again into its accustomed channels. The people were laughing and chatting and filling all the eating-houses, as though making up for lost time. One wondered what the antagonism would all end in.

There was in Venice a committee which looked after Venetian interests. On all the public anniversaries bombs were fired and flags were flown. In all the Government Departments the committee placed spies, who were so clever that they were seldom detected by the Austrians. Even in the cathedrals those men would sometimes explode bombs. The antagonism between the Venetian and the Austrian was shown in the piazza, perhaps, more than elsewhere. The military band

played there three times a week, winter and summer,—played gloriously all the best Italian airs. Much as they loved music, the Venetians walked up and down the quay, or in the arcades. They would not enter the square until the music was finished. Such was their pride! The cafés had no longer their gay and lively reputation. Only at Florian's did the Austrians and the Venetians sometimes intermingle—and that was because of the foreigners. Usually the Venetians had their separate cafés, and the Austrians theirs — the Quadri and the Specchi.

The piazza of St. Mark's seems to be the very heart of Venice, the very core, from which everything radiates, only to return. If you lose yourself in Venice, and go on walking, you will be sure to find your way back to the piazza sooner or later. At eight o'clock the piazza was at its very gayest. Nothing could be more lively, more amusing. It was lined with cafés—the cafés "Suttil," "Quadri," "Costanza," and "Florian"; which last reminds one very much of the "Café Royal" in Paris, and was certainly quite as famous. The old proprietor of this restaurant was greatly patronised by the Venetian nobility, who were loud in their praises both of himself and of his viands. The first Florian lived

A WOMAN OF THE PEOPLE

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in the time of the Empire. There is a charming story told of him and the artist Canova. The old hotel-keeper was very much troubled with gout, and Canova, to whom Florian had rendered many services, modelled the affected leg in plaster, in order that he might have a shoe made which would fit exactly, and so ease the pain. No doubt (but this is pure surmise) Florian favoured the artist, in return for his kindness, with a dish of his famous "sorbet au raisins."

Street vendors of all kinds swarmed in the piazza at night—flower-girls of the most obliging natures, who, if you would not buy their wares, would thrust a bouquet into your hand gratis (you were, of course, supposed to repay them at some other time). There were musicians of every sort and kind—some with guitars; others with mandolines; some playing selections from the operas; others singing "Funiculi" and "Santa Lucia" in high tenor voices; deep-chested, bronze-faced men who explained that they were once operatic stars, but were now reduced, by the injustice of managers and the villainous tempers of the prima donnas, to street singing. There were men who went about selling frosted fruits on long sticks, crying "Caramel, caramel!" and giving descriptions of

their wares in almost every European language. People of all races were there—red-faced Englishmen and fair women, with their rosy daughters in sailor hats, on the way from Switzerland, the respectable English father explaining St. Mark's with a comprehensive wave of the hand. There were Frenchmen, Americans, Austrians, Italians, either talking volubly or deadly quiet; Greeks, with long bluish-black hair floating out behind them, and caps with silk top-knots (these were captains of small vessels coming from Cyprus and Syria, and they went to the Café della Costanza, where they could procure mocha and the pipe they loved best); and young Venetian gentlemen who spent their lives for the most part in drifting from one café to another, generally handsome, well-dressed men with immaculate linen and pointed beards carefully cut, carrying long canes, and the lightest of kid gloves (their main object seemed to be to stare at all the pretty women); and Austrians, smart, good-natured people, who frequented their own cafés, with much talk and laughter and rattling of swords. Now and then one saw Venetian women of the upper classes on the piazza, but very rarely. They were extremely indolent and lazy, and seldom went out. The weather, they would

tell you, was never sufficiently fine: there was too much sun, or a sirocco was coming, or a cloud threatened rain: the slightest thing deterred them. Often the utmost exertion a Venetian woman would allow herself in the day was to pass from her sofa to her balcony to breathe the freshness of the flowers. Consequently, she had a complexion which was extremely delicate, a sort of pearly whiteness. Sometimes she would take a turn or two in the piazza with her husband or brother as cavalier, and languidly sip anise and water at the Café Florian.

For the most part the ancient aristocracy of Venice lived in retirement and were very poor. They dwelt in palaces whose walls were covered with priceless paintings by great masters, with which they would not part. They dined off a dish of polenta or fried fish, which a valet brought from a tavern near by. Their poverty and the fear of spies and informers combined in making society in Venice extremely reserved. It was impossible for a stranger to penetrate into the midst.

In summer, in the months of the dog-star, those few among the patricians who were well-to-do flew to their villas on the banks of the Brenta, on the mainland. They returned to Venice in winter,

only because, they said, the odours from the lagoons at that time were unhealthy and caused fever. Those who had no country houses, and could not afford to travel, shut themselves up in their palaces and drew down their blinds until it was the fashionable time to appear. In the dead season there were no lamps lit in the great entrances, and the palaces were silent. The family lived in the back rooms on the top story. The rest of the house was let. Most of the palaces were built round courtyards, and the contessa might go thither as often as she pleased to interview tradesmen and bargain for fish—there at least she would be free from espionage.

As a matter of fact, it was pleasant to be in Venice at that season. The heat was less: the sun did not bake the ground as it did on the mainland. Owing to the sirocco which blew across the water, the air was cool and sweet. Human beings, however, are ever the slaves of custom, and it was the fashion for Venetian noblemen to spend the summer months on the Brenta. The river scenery had a fascination for them, just as the Thames has for Londoners. All along the banks were rows of little, bright, stuccoed villas, somewhat flimsy, each with its patch of garden and its shrubbery at the

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back, where the family sat all day. Now and then one saw a nobleman's palace breaking the line of somewhat uninteresting houses. Such was the magnificent villa at Stra, belonging to a princely Venetian family, with its great sweeps of green lawns, its orangeries, its alleys, and quaintly cut yews. Venetians love nature when it has been trimmed by man. Certainly the banks of the Brenta are very beautiful, especially in spring, when the water is covered with lilies of yellow and white, and the banks are lined with scented flags, and the larks tip the surface of the water with violet wings and sing as they mount against the sun. It is not unlike the scenery of some quiet English stream.

This custom of spending the summer months in the suburbs of Venice was called "villeggiatura." It was one of the gayest times of the year for the Venetians. They lived by night. All day long they lay behind closed blinds, while the sun parched and baked the ground. Only from five o'clock in the afternoon until four in the morning could they be said to live. Then they held dances, card-parties, and flirtations. During these hours, when the temperature was low, amusement and pleasure reigned supreme; but no sooner did the

sun begin to rise than, as surely as Cinderella disappeared at the stroke of twelve, the gay society of the Brenta vanished, and the place lay dead and silent once more under the intolerable glare.

How different society in Venice was in the early days! Then the houses were marvels of luxury; the finest wit, the most brilliant conversation, and the most delightful music were to be heard in Venice. It was not in the houses of the old aristocracy that the most brilliant people—painters, writers, poets, and politicians—assembled. It was in the houses of women who were looked upon as more or less shady persons, whom no Venetian gentleman would dream of introducing to his wife. The wives of the aristocracy were seldom seen except at public functions. They took much the same position in society as the "honoured interior" takes in Japan at the present day. (The geisha, although she is infinitely more entertaining, has no social status whatever.) The Venetian lady of quality, unlike the "honoured interior," dressed in the most magnificent style. In the estimate of her husband nothing was too gorgeous or too costly for her to wear. Among all those of the larger towns of northern Italy,

THE BOAT-BUILDING YARD AT SAN TROVASO

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Venetian women of the sixteenth century were the first to wear needle-point.

Although the ideal woman of that time had to be tall, a Venetian mother never troubled herself about the height of her daughter. At any moment she could transform the girl's dwarfish stature to that of a splendid giantess by the use of a pair of high pattens, which were unnoticed beneath the long stiff dress. Neither was the colour of the hair a source of inconvenience. Should a girl's locks be of a mousey nondescript shade, her mother, instead of using injurious dyes, made her daughter sit every day for three hours in the front balcony where the sun shone the brightest, dressed in a crownless hat, so that her tresses might be pulled through it, and a very broad brim, in order that her face should not be tanned. Then the damsel's maid would sit and comb her mistress's hair, bleaching in the sun. Girls were never dressed so richly as their mothers. In fact, the uniform dress was very simple, generally plain black or white. When they went to church they wore long white veils, or falzulo, and on ordinary occasions long gauzy silk ones, through which they could see, yet not be seen. On her marriage day the girl was first introduced into society, and saw the bride-

groom for the first time. After marriage the rules which ordered her life were not nearly so restricting.

In 1614 certain regulations were passed with regard to dress and household extravagances—the amount of money to be spent on dress, liveries, gondolas, jewellery, feasts and entertainments, gold and silver plate, and even the dishes and the menus of dinner-parties. All these were limited.

The earliest nobility consisted of twenty-four families who ruled as tribunes over the twelve islands of the lagoons that formed the Venetian State. Some of these families are still represented in Venice. In the year 1296 a rigid and definite aristocracy was formed. Those who held chief places in the management of the State, whether they were noble or they had gained importance through their riches, determined to establish themselves as the permanent rulers of Venice, and to close the doors of office against all parvenus. Thenceforward only near relations of those who sat in the Great Council could be recognised as members of the caste. The twenty-four families, nevertheless, had distinction, and were called the "old houses." Admission to the Venetian nobility was rarely conferred on anyone save foreign princes

MIDDAY ON THE GRAND CANAL

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or distinguished generals. Now and then, when the State was sorely in need of money, a Venetian family was ennobled; but for the most part the aristocracy guarded their privileges most zealously.

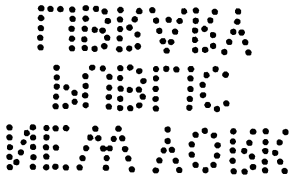
In the days of her decadence, in the eighteenth century, the tightly-laced, lackadaisical men and the hooped and brocaded women of Venetian society lived a curious, aimless, artificial life. Their greatest pleasure seems to have lain in gossiping, eating, drinking, and generally struggling to kill time. It was an inane life, frigid, without freedom, without heart, without strong emotion. All pleasures seem to have been carried out by rule. Even the laughter and the jokes were artificial. There can be but small wonder that society fell into broken fortunes.

The ideal nobleman of to-day is a stronger, more active, finer person altogether than his senatorial ancestor. His character is healthier. He adopts more or less a country life. He owns property on the mainland, and is very much occupied in trying to make it pay. He rears cattle, grows crops, makes wine on his own premises, is interested in silk-growing and in model farms, and competes for agricultural prizes offered by the Government. His Venetian palace does not interest him greatly.

He spends a few months there in the season, gives one or two large entertainments, and is constantly making alterations and improvements; but his heart is in the country, and he leaves Venice for his rural palazzo on the slightest pretext. This Venetian noble of to-day thinks a great deal of himself. His temper is haughty, and there is no softness or geniality about him. Nevertheless, he is a decided improvement.

What society there is still to be found in Venice is constituted by foreigners, mainly English and American. One of the great things to be done is to take a gondola and go to the Canal of the Slaves, beyond the public gardens on the island of St. Peter—to the home of an old fisherman celebrated for his fish dinners. This fisherman's cottage is just as celebrated in Venice as the Trafalgar Hotel in London, or the Ship Tavern at Greenwich, or La Rapée in Paris. Here, however, is a more picturesque environment—boats drawn up on the yellow sand, nets stretched to dry in the sun, planks forming a landing-place in front of the houses—all is very simple. One eats the fish dinner in a garden, under an arbour shaded by vines, where flowers and edible vegetables grow in charming but ill-kept confusion. The host is jovial; his wife, a

THE FISH MARKET



great authority, is the cheerful mother of many children.

One finds on one's travels that each city has its local and peculiar dish—Marseilles its "bouille à baisse"; Venice its "soupe au pidocchi"—mussels, gathered in the lagoons and canals, flavoured with spices and aromatic herbs. Personally, I would rather this Venetian viand were not so classical; but you would touch the people to the quick if you refused their offering. After it come oysters from the arsenal, eels and mullet from Chioggia, fried sardines, white wine of Policella, and fruits from the hills of Este, Marselice, and Montagnana. At the end of the repast one is presented with a bouquet from the garden.

GONDOLAS AND GONDOLIERS

GONDOLAS AND GONDOLIERS

No conveyance in this world is more delightful than the gondola. In appearance it is undoubtedly the most beautiful vessel in the world. Like most characteristic objects appertaining to Venice, it is suitable to the place: in fact, it is the outcome of the place. There is nothing strange or unnatural about Venice. Everything there seems to have come about through force of necessity, and is therefore perfectly beautiful. Even as the hansom cab suits London, or the 'rickshaw suits Japan, or the jaunting-car suits Ireland, so the gondola is the vessel for Venice. You cannot separate the lagoon from the gondola. One completes the other. Without either Venice would be impossible. The gondola alone can wend its way through the intricate water-streets of the Queen of the Adriatic.

There is no indication of movement whatever in a gondola. The craft has no springs, no cogs, no jarring wheels or oily machinery, no vibration. Simply one sees the palaces glide by in front of one, and hears the water making a lapping noise under the bows. The gondolier is out of sight. Nothing blocks your view of sea and sky, save the slender steel ferro at the prow. The gondola is built for leisure: one cannot quite imagine it, let us say, in America. It is a historic vessel, with a flavour of sentiment and antiquity about it, built by a leisured people for idleness, not for business or for hurry. It is long and slender, flat-bottomed, and tapers towards each end, where it rises considerably above the water. It draws but little water, and has much the form of a skate. The felce (cabin), placed somewhat astern, is draped with black cloth, which can be removed in the summer-time to make room for a striped awning. This, however, the true Venetian loathes: rather than use it, I am sure, he would be willing to swelter under the felce. On each side of the cabin there is a window, which can be closed in three separate ways—by a bevelled Venetian glass let down; by a blind with movable blades; by a strip of cloth dropped over.

MIDDAY ON THE LAGOON

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The gondola is made to hold four people. There are morocco cushions on either side. As the seats are very low, you are supplied with two silken cords with handles, to assist you to rise. As the cabin is too small to turn in, one must enter a gondola backwards. The woodwork is carved according to the wealth of the owner or the taste of the gondolier. Sometimes it is very elaborate. Above the door is generally a copper shield on which the coat-of-arms of the owner is engraved, surmounted by a crown; on the felce there hangs, in a small frame, an image of the Holy Virgin, or of St. Mark, or of St. Theodore, or of St. George, or of some saint for whom the gondolier has a special devotion. The lantern also hangs here—a custom which, as the gondolas sometimes run without the star in front, is gradually dying out. On account of the coat-of-arms, the saint, and the lantern, the left is the place of honour: there the ladies are placed, or any aged or distinguished person. There is in the felce a sliding panel, through which one can communicate with the gondolier on emergency. At the prow there is a halberd-like piece of iron, smooth and polished, called "the ferro," much like the finger-board of a violin. This serves for decoration, for defence,

for counterpoise to the rower in the stern, and to test the height of the bridges. It is the pride of the gondolier to keep this always as bright as silver. Often when a crowd of gondolas are moored thickly about the landing-stage, the ferro is used as a wedge, by the aid of which boats can be divided. The rower plies his oar standing on a small platform on the poop, not far behind the cabin, and facing the direction in which the gondola is to move.

The skill with which the gondolier manages his graceful craft is extraordinary. He stands quite upright on the poop, one foot placed firmly in front of him, and throws the weight of his body forward on his oar to such an extent that one fears he may follow it into the water. It is only by long habit that he can procure the necessary balance. The gondola is sensitive to the least impression, and the downward stroke has the effect of sending the boat round. It is only by turning the blade in the water, and raising it gradually upward, that the gondola can be kept straight. The oar rests in a fork, beautifully designed to allow free movement. The gondolier, sole director of his craft, uses the oar sometimes as a paddle, and sometimes as a boathook. He rows always on one side.

Under the hands of an efficient man, the gondola glides over the water like a living thing, turning the corners of canals with great precision.

Sometimes on festa days the gondoliers practise feats, such as setting the vessel full-tilt and with all their might against the stone wall of a quay, going with such rapidity that you expect man and boat to be dashed to pieces. Just at the last moment, with a powerful turn of the oar that is interesting to watch, he stops dead at the base of the quay, sometimes nearly grazing it. In much the same way, in the At Maidan of Constantinople, long ago, Arab and Turkish horsemen charged against stone walls and suddenly pulled up.

Very different is the gondola in the hands of an amateur. Many are the duckings that ensue. Some of the young patricians, however, occasionally don the traditional jacket, cap, and girdle of a gondolier, and guide their own craft in a remarkably graceful manner.

Few people have any knowledge of the real meanings of the gondoliers' cries, some of which are peculiarly sweet and characteristic. When a man wants to pass on the left, and does not intend to use the backward stroke, he cries, "Premi!" If, on the other hand, he wishes to pass on the right,

he cries, "Stali!" Sometimes, if when turning a dangerous corner he wishes to be especially emphatic, he cries, "Premi! Premi!" and "Stali! ah, Stali!" The gondola can be stopped immediately, however great the rate at which it is travelling, by placing the blade in front of the fork. If a man is really expert he stops his gondola very suddenly, making a great deal of foam with his oar. When stopping a gondola thus the gondolier cries, "Sciar!" As you approach the landing-stage a crowd of ragamuffins, old and young, called "crab-catchers," come forward, holding in their hands staffs, with bent nails attached, with which to secure your gondola as you place your foot on shore.

The gondolier is a voluble, gossiping person. He loves to have a chat at the top of his voice with another of his kind, and to scream repartee across the water. He enjoys nothing more than a quarrel, especially with a man who is across the canal. Invariably they pass from pertinent observations on their personal appearances to defamation of their women. If such language were used at close quarters on either bank they would come to blows. I once saw two gondolas hook on to each other by mistake with their iron axes, and I

A TRAGHETTO

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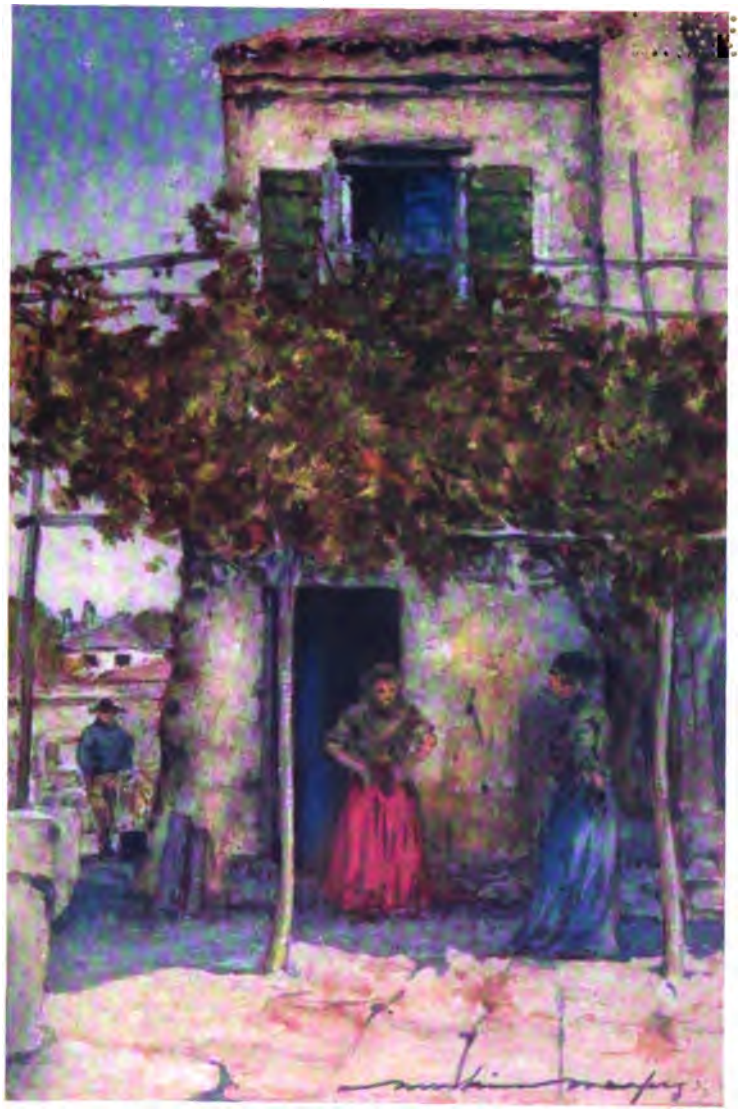

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shall never forget the discussion that ensued. It made one's blood literally curdle! The men looked like two angry sea-birds pecking at each other as they pulled and pulled in their endeavour to release themselves. When this had been accomplished they stood upright, each on his own poop, brandishing their oars as though they longed to kill. As a matter of fact, there is rarely any violence among Venetians except in language. "Body of Bacchus!" one shouts. "Blood of David!" the adversary answers. These mythological oaths being not sufficiently comforting, they continue: "Low crab!" "Sea-lion!" "Dog!" "Son of a cow!" "Ass!" "Son of a sow!" "Assassin!" "Ruffian!" "Spy!" Having reached the worst taunt in their vocabulary, they take to cursing the rival saints. "The Madonna of thy landing is a street-walker who is not worth two candles!" one will cry. "Thy saint is a rascal who does not know how to make a decent miracle!" the other will rejoin. The profanity becomes more terrible as the distance between them increases. Possibly next time they meet they will drink a glass of wine together without remembering the quarrel.

The gondolier is a more intelligent person than the ordinary hackman. He knows all the histories

of the different places of interest, and relates them for the benefit of foreigners. He has a few words of French and English. Of course, he is a rogue by nature, and will cheat you on every possible occasion; but that conduct is common to the carriers of all countries. And there is something very frank and amusing about the way in which they commit their petty thefts. A gondolier likes to serve Englishmen or Americans, who pay good prices; but a German is beyond his comprehension. The Teuton either goes by the tariff or walks—an eminently foolish act, in the gondolier's opinion.

Every gondolier belongs to a traghetto (ferry-boat station), from which gondolas cross over to Venice from various points on the Giudecca. These traghette have been established for centuries —no one knows exactly how long; but certainly they were in existence in the fourteenth century. To a gondolier a traghetto is, as it were, a club. There are sixteen traghette. Each is governed by its own laws and constitutions, which are still strictly kept; each has its own history, archives, and parchment documents. By this society are regulated the gondolier's wages, the limits of his obedience, his holidays, everything appertaining to his welfare. There is at each traghetto a little

house in which the gondoliers can sit and gossip and mend their boats.

One sees some of the finest types there. Years ago they used to sing there on moonlight nights, in their beautiful broken Venetian patois, verses from Tasso. It is long since they have done this as a habit; but they will do it sometimes if you pay them sufficiently well. One often hears them singing on the lagoon to the accompaniment of an Englishman's golden coins. You can almost imagine on such occasions that you are living away back in the Middle Ages—except that now the Venetians drink a good deal, as they certainly never did then, and sing in thick, guttural voices, somewhat hoarse, but on the whole beautiful, as the musical Venetian dialect must always be. The songs that they sing are all about lovely maidens and romantic excursions on the water. The singing is very fine from a distance, the melody of a human voice floating out on the calm and silence of the night. The gondoliers are proud of their talent, and value it highly.

Nearly every gondolier belongs to a bank. He is a capable financier. In company with twenty-nine other men, he deposits 10 lire, and pledges to pay a weekly sum of 1 lira throughout the year.

On his failing to pay up once a week, 10 per cent. on each lira is charged. Gondoliers are supposed to borrow a certain amount, for which 10 per cent. is charged, every year. The accounts of the bank are settled in September, and then a new venture is started.

The gondolier is an inflammable person. He is much taken up with pretty women getting in and out of gondolas. Love-making with him begins on the bridges in the narrow canals, or at the windows. One fine day, generally very early in life, when propelling his boat slowly down a side canal, he sees at an iron grated window the face of a girl. Instantly becoming enamoured, boldly he takes up his position every day underneath her casement, waiting for a look, sighing for a smile. If by chance the maiden should appear and return his salute, he takes himself off with great joy; and at the end of the day, when his work is done, he and a friend in whom he has confided dress themselves in their best, and call upon the father of the girl, formally to ask her hand. He states his family, his profession, the amount of his income, and the extent of his love. Two or three months are allowed to elapse. Then there will be more gazing at the window and meeting in the calle.

MARIETTA

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If by the end of that time their affection has declared itself sincere, the lover and his parents are invited to supper at the girl's home. Every stage in a Venetian's love affair is marked by feasts, generally suppers. On this occasion the young man again asks the father's consent. This is accorded him, and the pair are blessed. The ceremony is called the "dimanda." A little later comes the betrothal ("segno"), when the lover presents the girl with her wedding ring, and, if he can afford it, other rings as well. There is a sumptuous supper, and thenceforward they are called respectively "novizza" and "spoza." During the time of the betrothal the poor gondolier is kept very busy buying and giving presents to the lady of his choice. He must give the proper things at the proper times, and never by any chance make the mistake of purchasing a comb or scissors, for one is an emblem of the witch, and the other signify a cutting tongue. He must remember to present to her at Christmas a confitura of fruit and raw mustard-seed, and a box of mandolato; on All Souls' Day a box of fare; at the Feast of St. Mark a boccolo or button-hole of rosebuds; at Easter a fugazza or cake; at Martinmas roast chestnuts. The thing for the girl to give in return is a silk handkerchief:

it is not considered etiquette to present her lover with a gift of great value.

In Venice everything is ruled by custom. The most important acts in a Venetian's life are bound and fettered by it, and he would never dream of breaking through. He will sacrifice anything for custom, and never count the cost. For example, if one saw a gondolier at a festa, or at a baptism, or at a wedding, you might take him for either a rich man or a spendthrift. As a matter of fact, he is neither the one nor the other. Only, he is bound by custom to do certain things and spend a certain amount of money at a festa, and he does it regally. He may have to pinch and scrape at home afterwards; but that is another matter.

The gondoliers are a very conservative people. They are the slaves of custom. Custom is to them a religion. They much prefer their ancient customs to any new order of comfort or convenience. Their lives are simple, bright, and easy; their wants are very few and moderate. House-rent is cheap: they can procure a fallen palace in moderately good repair for half a franc a day. They are frugal and easily pleased; their constitutions are sound; their climate is fine, and the air they breathe is pure. Consequently, the gondolier

can live happily, with his wife, on a franc and a half a day. His meals, to be sure, are always the same—coffee and bread in the morning, polenta and fish at mid-day, a soup of shell-fish or artichokes at night. When the family begins to be large, the gondolier's life is not ideal; still, in spite of the hunger and poverty and crowding in Venetian houses, a great deal of joy manages to find room. If a baby lives, he grows up into a fine healthy man, robust and happy; but usually he dies, especially if he is one of many. Venetian women seem to have naturally not the slightest idea how to bring up a baby. It is only after constant habit and practice, and the loss of lives, that a mother seems to grasp the first principles of a baby's up-bringing. Before that she will feed it, at two months old, on black coffee, sour apples, and wine; allow it to swallow all kinds of lotions and concoctions prepared by the doting old crones of the quarter. As the child grows older she lets it wear during winter the clothes which it wore in summer. Then she wonders why out of eight children only four are living. It is a beautiful sight to see a great gondolier nursing his little child. He may be harsh and bullying to his fellows; but he treats Baby with the utmost

tenderness and gentleness. The child is a good deal safer in his arms than in those of the mother.

The chief amusements of the gondolier are to go to the opera or to see marionettes, to make up a party and spend the day in the country, to compete in a rowing match, and to give a little supper at a wine-shop. It is on such days as these that the true freshness and warmth of his nature appear, and one sees the gondolier as he is—mirthful, pungent, gay.

There are two things about which the gondolier is particular. One is his bread, and the other is his wine. One seldom finds good wine in Venice. It is only when the red wine arrives fresh from Padua and Verona that it is good. Then everyone rushes to the wine-shops; for nothing spreads quicker than the reputation of a good wine, and everyone clamours for it. Very soon it becomes watery and sour. The white wine the gondoliers do not like at all. Of bread there are all kinds. One is expected to have a preference for a certain make, and there are many different makes. There are the Chioggian bread, the "pane Commune," the "pane col agid," and many others.

Men of the gondolier class do not think a great

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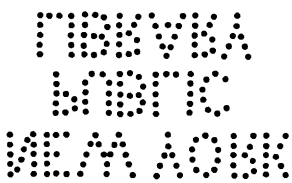

deal of religion. That is reserved for women. Church-going is no longer a habit with the men. Still, whenever matters of ancient custom step in they invariably do their duty—as in events of domestic life, such as confirmations,—and the little chapel to the Madonna at each traghetto has always its flowers and its few candles placed there by the reverent hands of the gondoliers.

Times were good for the gondoliers when Venice was rich and prosperous. Nowadays their gains are meagre, and they number hundreds where they numbered thousands in the old days. Noblemen kept six or seven gondolas, with attendant gondoliers, and, besides paying them an ample salary, on festa days allowed them to exact any payment they chose.

If you are staying in Venice for any length of time, it is better to hire a gondola and gondolier by the month than by the day. One only pays five francs a day, and when off duty the youth makes an excellent servant in the house. He comes and knocks at your water-gate at a certain time every day; also he will wait at table, act as footman, take care of the children; in fact, he will do everything one wishes; and he pays the proprietor of the gondola, out of his own pocket, one franc a day.

It is the ambition of every gondolier to serve an "Inglese."

They say that Venice is always silent; but I can vouch that it is not so. At night, if your lodgings are anywhere near a landing-place, you will find that it is very noisy indeed. The gondoliers sleep at their posts on the pedestals of the two columns as they sit waiting for a job, and they love their repose in the sunshine; but at night they become extremely lively, and keep up a perpetual disturbance of laughter, shouts, and songs until two o'clock in the morning. They sit on the marble steps, or on the ends of their gondolas; or they eat shell-fish and drink wine under the light of the lamps in the niches of the Madonnas at street corners; vagabonds from their beds in the street arise and join them.

One sees on the lagoons gondolas of all kinds, carrying passengers of all kinds, and it is sometimes interesting to peep inside as they pass. There are official gondolas, with the Italian banner floating at their sterns, carrying some cold, stiff functionary in full-dress uniform, his breast covered with decorations. Another carries English people, phlegmatic tourists, to Chioggia; another, with lowered felce, hides lovers who are going to break-

fast somewhere on the lagoon; yet another, a larger gondola, takes a family to the sea baths at the Lido. There is a red craft waiting at the foot of some steps; a red bier is brought out of a church by a red cortege,—it is a corpse, to be buried in a cemetery on an island on the way to Murano. (When anyone dies in Venice a notice is posted up on his house, and on the houses round about, stating the age, place of birth, and the illness of which he died; also saying that he has received the Sacrament and died a good Christian; prayers are asked for his soul.) There are gondolas in which are musical instruments of all kinds—violins of Cremona, cornets, mandolines, tambourines,—a complete orchestra. Quite a large flotilla of gondolas follow in its wake. One has fastened to the side a bluish monster splashing and making the water foam. That is a dolphin, a marine curiosity which is displayed by the proud possessors under all the balconies as they pass, collecting money in a hat. In order that it may be seen to advantage, the animal is kept half in the water and half out.

If one is at all interested in gondolas—that is to say, in the making of them,—nothing could be more fascinating than to spend a few hours in a squero (building yard). Any gondolier will be

pleased to take you there, for he is inordinately proud of his craft. The squeri are picturesque; but somehow one always associates them with pitch. The place reeks with it. Always in one corner there stands the pitch-pot, sending a stream of thick black smoke up into the air. Small boys prance around, looking like young imps among the smoke and blaze, and wave smearing brushes in their hands. Long lines of boats, like some strange fish out of water, are drawn up, waiting to be cleaned or mended. The bottom of a gondola has to be dried thoroughly and quickly before receiving its coat of melted tallow. This is done by lighting a blazing fire of reeds under the boat, the flames leaping high into the air. Volumes of smoke arise, roll up over the house-tops, and are swept away by the breeze. Boys dance a kind of war-dance round the flames. The art of gondola-building is exacting. Three qualities are absolutely necessary to the formation of a perfect craft. It must draw but little water; it must turn easily; and it must be rowable by one oarsman only. To secure this, the hull is built of light thin boards, and only a portion of the flat bottom rests upon the water. Thus the boat swings as on a pivot. Then, the gondola is not equally divided by a line

A SQUERO OR BOAT-BUILDING YARD IN VENICE

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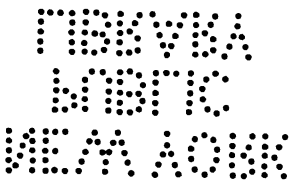

drawn from stern to bow: in order that the rower may be balanced, there is more bottom on one side than on the other. The various woods of which a gondola is made must be chosen with great care. They must be well seasoned and without knots, for the planks are liable to warp and the knots to start. Once every twenty days in summer the gondolier forfeits his four lire and takes his gondola to the squero to be cleaned and scraped. Weeds rapidly collect at the bottom when the water is warm, and the deadly toredo bores holes through the planking. The gondola is hauled up high and dry, and a fire burnt underneath it. A whole day's earnings in the summer season is a great loss to the gondolier; but if he keeps his gondola in good condition it will last him for a considerable time, perhaps for five years, and, besides, when the bottom of the boat is kept clear of weeds and well greased the speed is greater. When a gondolier sells his craft it becomes a ferry-boat for five years, the wood-work slowly bowing and bending until it becomes a gobbo half buried in the water. Later it is sold for five lire, broken up, and burnt in the glass manufactories of Murano.

The natural history of these objects and their gradual development through centuries would form

a fascinating chapter. To gain some idea of what the gondola once was, it is as well to study the pictures of Gentile Bellini and Carpaccio in the Academy. There you will see Venetian nobles in their gondolas with their light Eastern rugs. The ferro was not then hatchet-shaped, with six teeth, as it is now, but a round club of metal. The rower was tall and graceful, standing on the poop in his parti-coloured hose and slashed doublet. One can see by these pictures what a great change the gondola has undergone. Those who have not been to Venice, and wish to know something of a gondola in its later stage, would do well to study the pictures of Guardi and Canaletto. Therein the gondola has not its old brilliant colouring; but what it has lost in colour it has gained in grace.

Some of the gondoliers are most skilful in managing without either keel or rudder; like the Vikings of old, steering with an oar behind. A good man is devotedly attached to his gondola. He knows its character and peculiarities. To the initiated every gondola differs in a hundred details from its fellow, although they may all have apparently been built on the same model. A gondolier's skill in rowing depends largely upon his knowledge of his craft. One can generally gauge

UNDER THE MIDDAY SUN

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the efficiency of a man by the brightness of his ferro. The slightest spot of dew or rain upon it produces a spot of rust which takes weeks of constant rubbing to efface. There is a good deal of brass-work which has to be kept clean; the cushions must be brushed, and the paint scrubbed; and altogether a gondolier spends quite an hour and a half a day on the toilet of his craft, polishing, oiling, and scrubbing. His own person does not occupy nearly so much of his attention.

The gondola is so closely connected with the life of the sea city that most of one's impressions of Venice are wound round and about it. It is not always safe out on the lagoon in a gondola. Often in summer or in autumn a gale will suddenly arise. Great masses of cloud will gather in the east, and gain upon you; they are curved into an arc by the pressure of the wind from behind, although upon the water there is scarcely enough breeze to fill a sail. These great billowy battalions, dark and angry, advance slowly, steadily; the water changes from a pale transparent to a pale sea-green as thick as jade. A feeling of oppression fills the air, a brooding stillness, for five minutes, while the storm-clouds gradually overtake you. Then comes a low humming noise like that of a threshing machine:

it is the wind on the nearest island. You down sail and make for the first port in view. The hurricane leaps out from the city, striking the water and tearing it into foam, flinging the spray high in air. There is hurry and confusion in the sky; the thundery clouds are rent and riven; and through the gaps of dull-coloured vapour you see the steely blue of the storm-clouds boiling as in a cauldron; and far above all is blue sky and sunlight; a rainbow spans the lagoon. Then the whole tornado sweeps away south-westward. The sun sets, leaving the sky dark, but with flaming streamers; then night falls over all. There is lightning and storm away in the distance. The heavens assume their customary deep blue, and the breeze is fresh and cool. These summer storms are sometimes almost tropical in their fury; but they are quickly over. Their path is narrow—usually confined to one line on the lagoon;—but where they strike they leave devastation in their track.

The Venetians love festas, and in the days of the city's wealth and pride the State lavished great sums and much care upon its entertainments. Certainly the natural capacities of the city gave splendid scope for great spectacles. It was a

A FESTA

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magnificent background, and seemed to invite display. The pictures of Bellini, Carpaccio, Veronese, and all the rest of the old Venetian masters, prove how deeply the people must have loved the pageants and State processions. With the collapse of the State these customs fell into disuse. For example, there was that wonderful old sport—how picturesque it must have been!—the battle on the bridge between the Nicolotti and the Castellani, rival factions of black and red. There also was the regatta (I am not sure if it continues)—a great spectacle that could not be surpassed by any in Europe. A race was rowed in light gondolas, smaller than those of ordinary use. The Grand Canal was crowded with boats of all sizes—sandolas, barche, barchette, tipos, cavaline, vigieri, bissoni,—there is no end to the variety of Venetian craft. The façades of the palaces fluttered with flags, tapestries, carpets, and curtains,—anything that would add to the general mass of colour. The balconies were filled with people; every window had its bevy of heads. Down below on the water the scene was brilliant. The course was kept by large twelve-oared boats, all decorated symbolically. One represented the Arctic regions, the rowers being dressed as polar bears, with blocks of

ice for seats; another the tropical regions, with palms and gorgeous flowers. In the evening there was a serenade, starting from a point above the Rialto. The singers and the orchestra were placed on a barge decorated and lighted by many coloured lamps, and the music of Donizetti's "A te, o cara" filled the air. The object of every gondolier on an occasion of this kind was to get his padrone as near to the music as possible, whether he wanted it or not. The singers' barge, therefore, was surrounded by a solid mass of gondolas, which floated slowly down the canal together, getting denser as the canal narrowed to pass under the Rialto bridge. It was a fantastic scene—with the masses of Bengal lights, the rising moon, the gondolas swaying gently to the rhythm of the song and the sea, and the statuesque gondoliers, creatures of the sea, standing upright on the stern of their vessels, or, oars in hand and hair blown by the breeze, silhouetted against a background of deep-blue sky.

The gondolier in Venice is an important person to the stranger. Half one's comfort depends on his worthiness or unworthiness. He is like the girl of childhood's fame "who, if she was good, was very very good, but, if she was bad, was horrid."

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If you are the employer of an ideal gondolier you will find him thorough, ready-handed, and versatile. In passing rapidly through Venice one does not properly appreciate his worth. You must own him for some months before you discover that he will attach himself to you and identify himself with your interests in an almost feudal manner. He will save you an infinity of trouble, and repay your confidence with honesty. The gondolier usually prefers to have a foreigner for a master: the foreigner pays well, never grumbling at the full tariff of five lire a day: also, as the foreigner does not know the language or the place, the gondolier becomes of some importance in the eyes of his neighbours, who bid for his patronage. With a Venetian master he would be paid from three to five lire a day; the work would be harder, and the hours later.

When the squerariola (gondola builders) have finished their work, the vessel will probably have cost three hundred lire. Even then the craft is not by any means complete. There are the steel ornaments and many other details to be bought and bargained for,—things not procurable at the squero. For the steel prow (ferro), which must have the edges of its teeth in one straight line, and

in these days of hurried workmanship is not always to be found, one must seek in all the smithies in Venice. A good gondolier, however, will often possess a ferro, an heirloom, made of hand-wrought iron, not cast in mould, heavy and brittle, as are the new ferri, but light and pliant. A ferro of the good and ancient make, if properly cared for and not allowed to rust, will outlive many a gondola. For the sea-horses, the rude carvings, the pictured Madonnas, the rugs and the covering for the felce,—all, in fact, that helps to make the gondola the picturesque craft it is,—one must go to the various shops in Venice.

Modern progress and modern ideas are rapidly sweeping away the ancient and hereditary profession of the gondolier. One feels that his life and that of the traghetto are drawing to a close —that soon they will be things of the past. What would the Grand Canal be like without its swiftly gliding gondola, black-hulled, black-roofed,—its most characteristic feature? What a terrible thing it will be when that exquisite art is forgotten,— when the Venetian can no longer judge the turn of a corner or balance himself on the poop,—when for the picturesque cries "Stali!" and "Premi!" will be substituted the clank and thud of the

steamers' screws! When a company first began to run steamers from Venice to the railway station and public gardens, the gondoliers struck. For three whole days there were no gondolas running in Venice; the canals were full of tightly packed vessels, while their owners hung together in groups at the wine-shops, talking. A strange and scratch fleet of nondescript boats plied between Venice and the islands, and the expression of the gondoliers, as they leaned over the bridges and watched the amateur watermen struggling with their oars, was quite unique. On the second day a notice was posted up in every traghetto begging the men to return to their work, and not to bring dishonour on a profession which had always been such a source of pride to Venice. This had no effect. The gondoliers merely enlisted the services of a barrister, getting him to take a copy of their demand to the Company — that the offending steamers should be removed. That was impossible. The steamers were cheap and useful, and the gondoliers could not be allowed to dictate to the State. However, they were told that if they returned peaceably to their work something might be done for them. They persisted in their strike, until suddenly—no one ever knew why, or whence

it came—a single gondola started running from one of the ferries. That broke the ice. The gondoliers rushed to their crafts and untied them. The strike was forgotten. The men's first thought was to find good custom. I have always felt that there was something touching in this hopeless struggle of the gondoliers against the modernity that is fast settling on and demoralising Venice.

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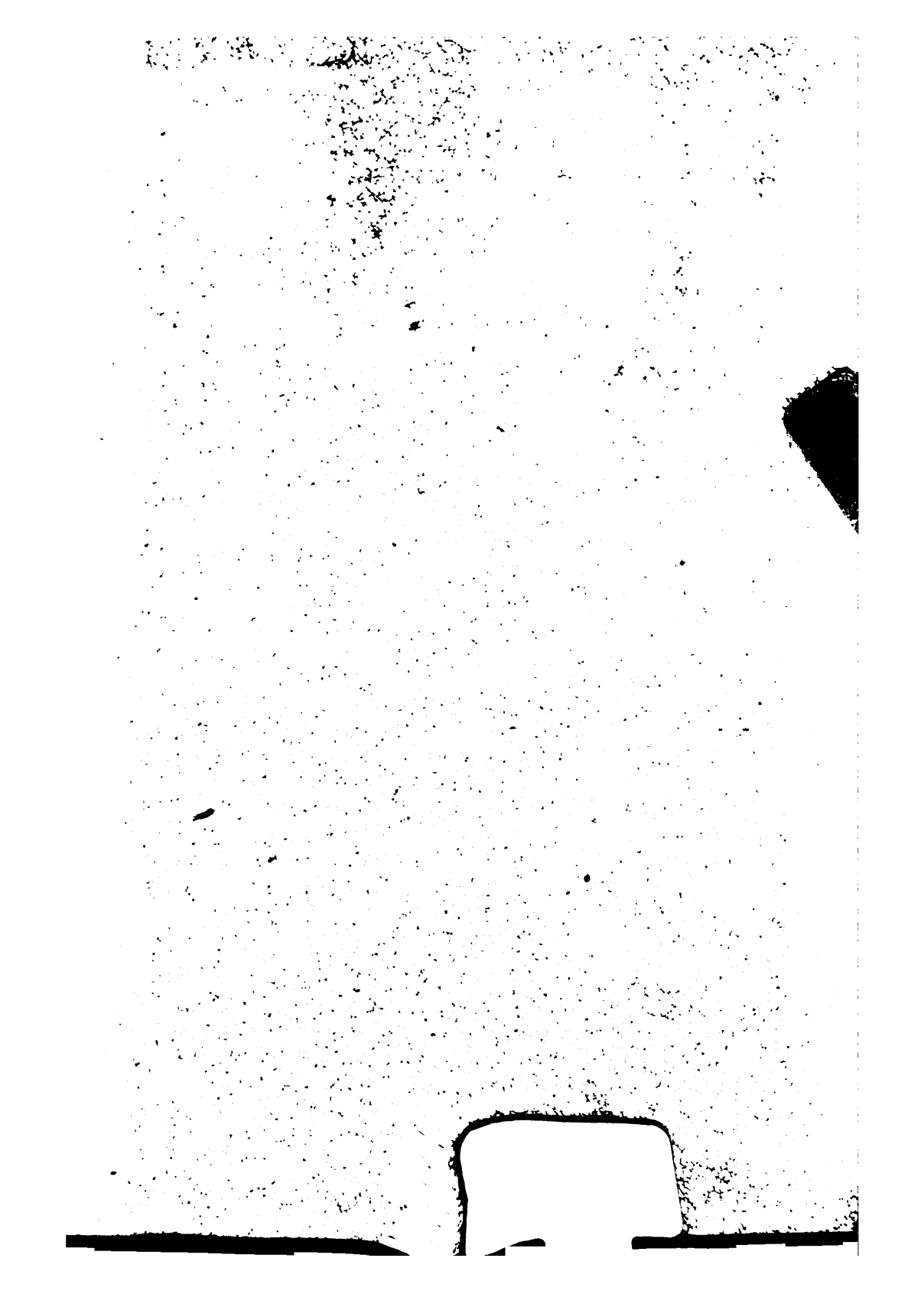
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